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# GULF TIMES SPORT



**FOOTBALL**

**Conte tells Barca to keep off Hazard**

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**SPOTLIGHT**

# 'I followed my heart, not the money, to PSG'

Neymar could make Paris debut against Amiens today



Brazilian superstar Neymar (R) shakes hands with Paris Saint Germain's Qatari president Nasser al-Khelaifi during a press conference at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris.

**Agencies**  
 Paris

Money was never the motivating factor for Neymar's record 222mn euro (\$263mn) transfer from Barcelona, the world's most expensive footballer said on his arrival at Paris St Germain yesterday.

Before taking to the pitch at the Parc des Princes stadium to show off his skills and new PSG shirt, the Brazilian forward told reporters he had moved to France because he "wanted a bigger challenge".

"My heart made this decision and I followed my heart," said the player who will reportedly be paid 45mn euros (\$53mn) a year.

"Money was never my motivation... I want to be happy, and I want my family to be happy. I'm really sad to hear that people think this way.

"If it was just about money, I could have gone somewhere else," he said.

The 25-year-old Brazilian superstar flew into Le Bourget airport, north-east of Paris, in a private jet yesterday morning before heading into the city in a motorcade.

He was presented to the international media at PSG's Parc des Princes stadium just after 1:30pm (1130 GMT) in his first public appearance since buying out his contract at Barcelona on Thursday.

"I want something bigger, a greater challenge. I am here to give my best and help the club win titles," said Neymar. He insisted he had come to France "for the ambition of the club, which is very similar to mine."

But Neymar admitted that leaving Barcelona, where he formed part of a lethal attacking trio with Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez, was not a decision he took lightly.

"It was one of my most difficult decisions. In Barcelona I had adapted well to the city and the

team. I had friends there and it has not been easy," he said.

"It was a tense time, thinking about what I should do in my life. I have left behind a lot of friends, but things go very fast in football."

Neymar will be presented to the PSG supporters today prior to his new team's first game of

the Ligue 1 season against promoted Amiens.

A ceremony will begin from 3:45pm (1345 GMT) with the kick-off put back quarter of an hour to 5:15pm to allow extra time for the player's unveiling before an expected sell-out crowd of more than 45,000.

But Neymar got a taste of what is to come when he stepped outside the Parc des Princes yesterday in his new team's kit, to be greeted by hundreds of ecstatic supporters.

Neymar, whose last game for Barcelona was in a friendly against bitter rivals Real Madrid last weekend in Miami, insisted he is ready to make his debut against Amiens, even though he had not yet spoken to PSG coach Unai Emery.

"I always want to play, so I am ready to do so tomorrow. I have trained in pre-season. I stopped for two days, but I am ready, I've seen the pitch and I want to put the PSG shirt on and play," he said.

On Thursday, the French league's governing body, the LFP, said it would work to ensure Neymar's contract was ratified "as soon as possible".

The transfer fee shatters the previous world record of 105mn euros set by Manchester United in signing the France midfielder Paul Pogba last year from Juventus.

It is an eye-watering sum, but one that PSG president Nasser al-Khelaifi insisted will eventually look like a bargain for the player who came third in the Ballon d'Or in 2015 behind Messi and Ronaldo.

"There are not two Neymars in the world. I would love for us to meet in two years and see what

## Annoyed Barca won't pay bonus

AFP, Barcelona: Barcelona won't pay a 26mn euro (\$30.8mn) bonus to Neymar for renewing his contract with the Catalan giants in 2016, a club spokesman said yesterday after his decision to join Paris Saint-Germain for a world record transfer fee. Josep Vives admitted Barca had been left irritated by the Brazilian's decision to leave despite signing a new five-year deal last year as PSG paid his 222mn euro (\$264mn) buyout clause to leave Barca powerless to prevent Neymar moving on.

"Any separation causes annoyance, especially when it is one not wished for by the club due to a unilateral decision on the part of the player," Vives told a press conference at the Camp Nou. "The player hasn't fulfilled his contract with the club, given that breach the club will not pay this renewal bonus."

Barca had deposited the bonus with a notary to be paid on September 1 had Neymar remained at the club, but have already recovered the 26mn euros. During his presentation as a PSG player yesterday, Neymar said that "at no point did I lack

respect to the supporters or the club" in deciding to bring to an end his four years in Catalonia. However, Vives insisted Barca are unhappy with the way in which his exit came about.

"There is annoyance at the decision, but also the way it came about."

Yet, Vives claimed Barca can bounce back from losing out on La Liga and the Champions League last season with the likes of Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez still among a star-studded squad.

"He is a great player, we have enjoyed him a lot, but the world doesn't end after Neymar," he added.

"It is not the first time that we have gone through a situation like this and the club has continued, grown and become more universal."

The move is not just a huge blow for Barca's prospects on the field, but their prestige as one of the world's richest and most successful clubs. It is 17 years since Barca last lost one of their prized assets against their will when Real Madrid paid Luis Figo's buyout clause for a then world record fee.

**THE BUZZ**

## Jubilation and ringing cash registers as Neymar arrives in Paris

**DPA**  
 Paris

A football club could hardly hope to start its season with more of a bang. Paris Saint-Germain have hit world headlines with the record-breaking 222mn euro transfer payment to release Neymar from his contract with Barcelona.

PSG, which came second in last year's championship, eight points behind winner Monaco, will be hoping for an outright win this year. But it is also setting its hopes higher: on the Champions League, which it has never yet won.

Neymar himself touched down in Paris mid-morning yesterday and was whisked to his hotel accompanied by police outriders. Footage released by the club and published on French media showed him practising keepy-uppies on the grass of the Parc des Princes stadium in western Paris, and greeting ecstatic supporters.

Club president Nasser al-Khelaifi said he was "very, very happy" to have Neymar in Paris. It was hardly an original sentiment from a club boss presenting a new signing, but al-Khelaifi looked like he meant it. PSG lost no time promoting its new player: already on Thursday night, it published a short video on social media with the strapline "He's coming" and views of the French capital.

Before midnight, it had announced that the new Neymar number 10 jersey would be available from 10am (0800GMT) in the club stores yesterday. Supporters were not slow to answer the call. Television pictures showed throngs gathering outside the PSG shop at Parc des Princes. At midday the queue outside the club's store on the Champs-

Elysees reached back to the nearest corner, while seven large security men guarded the entrance.

"It's a historic moment, it's something big," exulted 20-year-old Ait from the Paris suburb of Cergy, who had already put on his new yellow Neymar away strip and was clutching a bag containing the blue and red home strip as well as a new football.

A man in a red PSG top, at the wheel of a white van, crashed a red light at a pedestrian crossing as he gawped and grinned, filming the crowds outside the shop on his mobile phone. "Never has a player been so eagerly awaited in the capital," wrote French sports newspaper *L'Equipe*. Neymar's signing was "one of the most important events in French football in the last 30 years," wrote the paper's veteran commentator Vincent Duluc.

Duluc noted that the transfer came at a time when French domestic football has been "margin-alised," falling out of the limelight compared to the other big European leagues of England, Italy, Germany and Spain.

"But we have the right to gawp, to be flabbergasted, to rejoice: this transfer comes like a storm that will shift all the lines, making PSG a global brand and bringing Ligue 1 into the light," he wrote. Whether out of noblesse oblige or genuine pleasure, PSG's rivals were quick to express appreciation for the new signing too.

"His arrival is good news for Ligue 1... and maybe a bit less good when we come face to face with him," Saint-Etienne captain Loic Perrin told newspaper *Le Parisien*. "Neymar at PSG? Even though I'm a goalkeeper and there's every chance that he'll give me a hard time, it's superb news for Ligue 1," Dijon goalkeeper Baptiste Reynet wrote on Twitter before the announcement.



PSG fans take photos outside the Parc des Princes stadium during the presentation of Neymar Jr. in Paris.

## SPOTLIGHT

# Conte tells Barca to forget move to land Hazard

Hazard is currently sidelined while he recovers from ankle surgery and will miss the start of Chelsea's Premier League title defence



Chelsea manager Antonio Conte speaks during a press conference yesterday.

AFP  
London

Chelsea manager Antonio Conte has told Barcelona there is no chance he will allow Eden Hazard to join the Spanish club as a replacement for Neymar.

Neymar completed his world record transfer to Paris Saint-Germain on Thursday, when the Brazil striker signed a five-year deal with the French club after paying 222mn euros (\$264mn) to release himself from his contract at Barcelona.

Neymar's exit leaves a vacancy in the Barca attack that reports have suggested they would like to fill with Chelsea forward Hazard.

Asked yesterday how he would respond to a big-money offer for Hazard, Conte told reporters: "We are trying to buy the players, not to sell them. Otherwise the number is always less and we are in trouble."

"These are rumours. Eden is very happy to stay with us and to start the new season."

Hazard is currently sidelined while he recovers from ankle surgery and the Belgian, who was injured on international duty at the end of last season, will miss the start of Chelsea's Premier League title defence.

Hazard's absence and Diego Costa's exile after his fall out with Conte leaves the Italian short of attacking options ahead tomorrow's Community Shield clash with Arsenal.

Quizzed on whether he had expressed an interest in Neymar before PSG swooped, Conte said: "No, not true."

"It's an impressive amount of money, £200mn. If PSG is able to do this why not?"

"For a normal player now you must be ready to spend £40mn, £50mn. If you want to buy a top player, you must be ready to spend this money."

While Conte was never in the hunt for

Neymar, he has been keen to add several new signings ahead of a twin assault on the Premier League and Champions League.

Having won the English title while absent from European football last season, Conte knows the demands on his squad will be much greater this term.

So far, he has landed former Real Madrid forward Alvaro Morata, midfielder Tiemoue Bakayoko from Monaco and defender Antonio Rudiger from Roma.

But Conte has also sold Nemanja Matic to Manchester United, while Bakayoko will miss the start of the season with a knee injury.

Expressing signs of frustration when asked about the club's transfer activity, Conte made it clear he wants more new faces.

"Now for us it is very important to try to improve our squad from the numerical aspect," he said.

"I think only one player is not enough to improve our team. We have a small squad.

"We need more players, not of the top level like Neymar, but to improve our squad and our quality. Now we have few players."

Given the significant improvements made by Manchester City and Manchester United, plus club record signings by Arsenal and Liverpool, Conte's concern is that Chelsea are standing still at a time when their rivals are progressing.

After Chelsea and Leicester City sacked Jose Mourinho and Claudio Ranieri less than a year after winning the title, the Chelsea boss is determined to avoid a second-season flop, starting against the Gunners tomorrow.

"It's normal to be a bit afraid to repeat the bad season from two years ago," he said.

"For sure we have to work very hard, harder than last season, to continue to improve every player. "We know Arsenal is a strong team. We want to try to start the season with a win. It's the first trophy of the season."

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE PLAY-OFF

## Liverpool's Klopp had Hoffenheim premonition



AFP  
London

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said he had a feeling his side would draw German opposition after they were paired with Hoffenheim in the Champions League play-off round yesterday.

Liverpool will travel to Klopp's homeland for the first leg on August 15 before Hoffenheim visit Anfield the following week, with a place in the group phase at stake.

"Very interesting. Actually, it was exactly what I expected when I had a look – if there's a choice, we always seem to take the German team! Sorry!" Klopp told the Liverpool website.

"It was clear from the first moment when we knew who we could face that there would be no easy game. It's Hoffenheim and that's for sure not an easy game."

"But we should always not forget what they thought in the moment they saw the draw – it's not the best thing they could get. I'm completely fine with it, happy to know and now we can start preparing."

The tie will pit Liverpool forward Roberto Firmino against his former club, the Brazilian having left Hoffenheim to move to England in 2015.

Hoffenheim were the last team in Europe's top five leagues to lose their unbeaten record last season, but have since seen Germany internationals Niklas Sule and Sebastian Rudy snapped up

by Bayern Munich.

Nevertheless, Klopp says they will represent a stiff test and was full of praise for their 30-year-old coach Julian Nagelsmann.

"When you are fourth in Germany, you are a strong side," said Klopp, whose side also finished fourth last season.

"It's a very interesting club. They have a lot of really good young players."

"They lost two of them – Rudy and Sule to Bayern – and had a little change. (They have) a very young manager, just 30 years old, a very talented man."

"First we'll play Watford, but at the same time we'll start preparing for Hoffenheim and it's really exciting."

Nagelsmann believes the clash with Liverpool will help put his club on the map.

"This puts us at the centre of attention," he said. "This is great for the public perception of our club."

Nagelsmann, who only turned 30 last month, is one of the most highly rated young coaches in the game.

He proved his talent by taking Hoffenheim from the brink of relegation in 2015-16 to finish fourth last season in Germany's top flight.

Nagelsmann knows his side face a difficult task, but says they will approach the tie full of belief.

"They won't be knocking back a few whiskeys just because they are playing us, but it's not as though we have no chance," he said.

## DEVELOPMENT

## Former Spurs striker Keane joins Indian side Kolkata

Reuters  
Kolkata

Indian Super League champions ATK have signed former Tottenham Hotspur striker Robbie Keane ahead of the 2017-18 season, the Kolkata-based franchise said yesterday.

Keane, a former Republic of Ireland captain, was a free agent after his contract with Major League Soccer club LA Galaxy expired in December.

"I feel extremely fortunate to have played for some of the best clubs in England and the USA, as well as representing my country at several major tournaments," Keane said in a statement.

"At this stage of my career, the offer to experience a new league and culture in Asia appealed to me."

"To join the current Indian Super League champions is a great pleasure and through hard work I hope to bring the ATK fans more success and enjoyment over the course of the 2017/2018 season."



The 37-year-old will link up with former Tottenham team mate Teddy Sheringham, who was appointed the new ATK manager last month.

Keane scored 126 goals in England's top flight with Coventry City, Leeds United, Wolverhampton Wanderers and Liverpool, in addition to Tottenham. He also netted 68 times in 146 appearances for Ireland before announcing his retirement from international football last year.

## BOTTOMLINE

## What next for cash rich but Neymar-less Barcelona?

AFP  
Madrid

Barcelona find themselves flush with 222mn euros (\$264mn), but faced with replacing one of the world's best players after Neymar's move to Paris Saint-Germain smashed the world transfer record.

The Catalans' under pressure board don't have much time to react with the transfer window set to shut on August 31. However, they can still count on one of the most talented squads in the world led by the likes of Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez.

Here, AFP Sports looks at what Barca must do to try and gain ground on bitter rivals and Spanish and European champions Real Madrid.

**AVOID FIGO-ESQUE CRISIS**  
Barca will suffer on the field for Neymar's absence, but seeing one

of their prized assets snatched away to an inferior league is also a massive blow to Barca's prestige and a reminder of days they thought were long gone.

The Catalans used to struggle to hold onto star names, particularly when Madrid's riches came calling. Luis Milla, Michael Laudrup and most famously Luis Figo crossed Spanish football's great divide.

When Figo left in similar circumstances to Neymar as Madrid paid his buyout clause for a world record fee in 2000, it floored Barca on the pitch and in the boardroom. The money was wasted and they didn't win a major trophy for five seasons.

Then came Messi and a host of world class home-grown talents to propel Barca to their most successful ever era, winning eight La Liga titles and four Champions Leagues titles in the past 12 years.

In the 17 years since Figo left Barca have become a brand and one of the richest clubs in the

world, plus they still have Messi. All of which should ensure the fallow period that followed Figo's departure isn't repeated.

## SPEND WISELY

The biggest challenge for Barca president Josep Maria Bartomeu is now how much cash to splash in the next four weeks, especially after two years in which they have largely overpaid for little return in the transfer market on the likes of Andre Gomes, Paco Alcacer and Arda Turan.

There will be pressure for the Catalans to reassert themselves by landing a marquee signing with Philippe Coutinho, Ousmane Dembele, Paulo Dybala and Kylian Mbappe all linked.

However, finding a like for like replacement for Neymar will be impossible – that is why he fetched a fee more than double the previous transfer record.

With that in mind Barca may be better placed in the long run to save some money for future

windows if they are not to end up poorer on the field and no better off financially from Neymar's move.

## GIVE YOUTH A CHANCE

Most worryingly for Barca's future is that Neymar has gone in his prime at 25, leaving behind an ageing squad.

Messi and Suarez are both 30, as is defensive leader Gerard Pique, whilst captain Andres Iniesta is 34 and out of contract at the end of the season.

One of the criticisms of Barca's evolution in recent seasons since Pep Guardiola's departure as coach in 2012 has been that graduates from the club's once famed La Masia academy have not been given a chance as the club turned to star signings such as Suarez and Neymar.

"Barcelona have been sleeping," Barca legend Xavi told the Tactical Room last month. "They have to strengthen the youth academy."

In need of fresh blood, Barca could do with the academy that produced Messi, Xavi and Iniesta coming good once more.

## REFIND BALANCE

In Neymar's departing words: "I made a trio with Messi and Suarez that made history. Conquered everything an athlete can conquer."

For three years the 'MSN' formed a thrilling front line arguably unrivalled in football history. In 110 matches together, they scored a combined 228 goals.

Yet, by building the team around three forwards, other parts of the team struggled, most notably midfield which had been their strength in the glorious Guardiola years.

The 'MSN' is no more, but if Barca use the Neymar funds to reinforce their midfield to back up the firepower still provided by Messi and Suarez, they will remain a force to fear in La Liga and the Champions League.

## Mata wants soccer players to give 1% to charity

**London:** Manchester United's Spanish international Juan Mata has promised to give 1 per cent of his earnings to charity and wants all fellow professional footballers to do the same. "I am launching something that I hope will change the world, even if only in some small way," he announced on The Players Tribune website ([www.theplayerstribune.com](http://www.theplayerstribune.com)). Mata said he would donate the money to Common Goal, a fund run by the charity streetfootballworld that supports football charities around the world.

"I'm asking my fellow professionals to join me in forming a Common Goal Starting XI. Together we can create a movement based on shared values that can become integral to the whole football industry – forever. "I'm leading this effort, but I don't want to be alone." Mata, who said he was shocked by the poverty he saw on a visit to Mumbai, India, said the long-term aim was for the entire football industry to contribute 1 per cent of revenue to grassroots football charities.

SPOTLIGHT

# Fiery Rabada gives South Africa early edge in fourth Test

The Proteas fast bowler finishes the day one with figures of two for 52 in 18 overs

AFP  
Manchester, United Kingdom

Kagiso Rabada took the prize wicket of Ben Stokes as South Africa held England to 260 for six on the first day of the fourth Test at Old Trafford yesterday. All-rounder Stokes, fresh from a hundred in England's 239-run victory in the third Test at The Oval, was leading a revival with the bat.

But fast bowler Rabada struck with the new ball in the penultimate over of the day when a full-length delivery, which surprised Stokes, smashed into the base of the stumps and bowled the left-handed batsman for 58. Rabada, banned from the second Test for swearing at Stokes in the series opener, yelled in joy. He finished the day with figures of two for 52 in 18 overs, but the worth of South Africa's efforts with the ball will only become fully apparent when they bat.

Jonny Bairstow, who might have fallen for four, was 33 not out and nightwatchman Toby Roland-Jones unbeaten on nought at the close. For the tenth successive Test, England captain Joe Root made a fifty. But only two of those innings have yielded hundreds and Root, who has previously acknowledged his 'conversion rate' as a failing in his otherwise impressive game, was out for 52 yesterday.

England were unchanged from the side that triumphed in The Oval's 100th Test, a result that left Root on the brink of a win in his first series as England captain at 2-1 up with one to play. But South Africa recalled seamer Duanne Olivier and batsman Theunis de Bruyn after pacemen Vernon Philander and Chris Morris were both ruled out with lower back strains.

Root again won the toss and batted. But struggling opener Keaton Jennings fell for 17. The South Africa-born left-hander, under pressure for his place after just one fifty in nine Test innings since a century on debut against India in December, was caught behind by schoolboy teammate Quinton de Kock off Olivier.

The Essex duo of Alastair Cook (46) and Tom Westley (29) both exited after lunch with England on 92.

Cook got a thin edge driving at left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj and was caught behind.

Westley, fresh from a second-innings fifty on debut at The Oval, nicked a good length Rabada ball, with de Kock holding a superb diving catch for his 100th Test dismissal. David Malan was looking for a big score after managing just 11 runs during his Test debut at The Oval.

Morne Morkel, however, saw off Malan, born in London but raised in South Africa, when the Middlesex left-hander edged a drive to Proteas captain Faf du Plessis at second slip. Morkel has repeatedly bowled well this series without proper reward.

Another example of his bad luck came



South African fast bowler Kagiso Rabada (centre) celebrates after taking the wicket of England batsman Tom Westley during the day one of the fourth Test at Old Trafford cricket stadium in Manchester, Britain, yesterday. (Reuters)

when Root edged the towering quick on 40, only for de Kock to inexplicably remain rooted to the spot for what was his catch. De Kock's anguished expression as the ball went through the slips for four spoke volumes.

Fortunately for de Kock, it was not an expensive error, with Olivier the beneficiary of a misjudgement by Root, lbw, to end a 101-ball stay. During his innings Root, at 26 years and 217 days, became the third youngest player after Indian legend Sachin Tendulkar (25 years, 301 days) and Cook (26 years and 10 days) to score 5,000 Test runs.

There was confusion when Bairstow appeared to be caught for four off Maharaj only for umpire Kumar Dharmasena to eventually ask for a review of Dean Elgar's slip catch. Despite seemingly insufficient evidence to change an on-field 'soft signal' of out, third umpire Joel Wilson ruled in England's favour. Stokes completed an 89-ball fifty before Rabada's late strike.

**ENGLAND DENY SOUTH AFRICA APPROACH FOR GIBSON**

The England and Wales Cricket Board said yesterday they had not received any

approach from their South Africa counterparts for Ottis Gibson amid reports he was poised to become the Proteas' new head coach.

England bowling coach Gibson was linked with the post by several British media outlets during yesterday's first day of the fourth Test against South Africa at Old Trafford. The current contract of South Africa head coach Russell Domingo expires at the end of this tour.

However, an ECB statement issued yesterday said no approach for Gibson had yet been received, while leaving the door ajar for a move when the series-ending fourth Test is finished. "We have had no approach from Cricket South Africa," it said. "We will not listen to any approaches until after the current series has concluded."

The 48-year-old Gibson is in his second spell working with England's pacemen after four years as head coach of his native West Indies from 2010-14. Former West Indies fast bowler Gibson rejoined England's coaching staff two years ago.

England, 2-1 up against South Africa, start a new Test series against the West Indies later this month

The ECB would, at the very latest, want any vacancy in their backroom team filled before this year's Ashes tour of Australia.

**SCOREBOARD ENGLAND I INNINGS**

A. Cook c de Kock b Maharaj	46
K. Jennings c de Kock b Olivier	17
T. Westley c de Kock b Rabada	29
J. Root lbw b Olivier	52
D. Malan c du Plessis b Morkel	18
B. Stokes b Rabada	58
J. Bairstow not out	33
T. Roland-Jones not out	0
Extras (b5, lb1, nb1)	7
<b>Total (6 wkts, 90 overs, 356 mins)</b>	<b>260</b>

**To bat:** M Ali, S Broad, J Anderson

**Fall of wickets:** 1-35 (Jennings), 2-92 (Cook), 3-92 (Westley), 4-144 (Malan), 5-187 (Root), 6-252 (Stokes)

**Bowling:** Morkel 19-4-58-1; Rabada 18-5-52-2; Olivier 19-3-72-2; Maharaj 29-9-54-1; De Bruyn 5-0-18-0 (nb)

**South Africa XI:** Dean Elgar, Heino Kuhn, Hashim Amla, Quinton de Kock (wkt), Faf du Plessis (capt), Temba Bavuma, Theunis de Bruyn, Keshav Maharaj, Kagiso Rabada, Morne Morkel, Duanne Olivier  
**Toss:** England

FOCUS

## Anderson eyes Ashes after Old Trafford honour

AFP  
Manchester, United Kingdom

England great James Anderson insisted he wanted to win the Ashes again after an end at his Old Trafford home ground was renamed in his honour. The Pavilion End at Lancashire's Manchester headquarters will now be known officially as The James Anderson End in recognition of England's all-time leading Test wicket-taker's "immense contribution" to both club and country in the 15 years since his first-class debut.

The swing specialist could bowl from The James Anderson End today, on day 2 of the fourth Test between England and South Africa at Old Trafford.

While Sachin Tendulkar won a 2011 World Cup final with India on a Wankhede ground in Mumbai where a stand was named after him, this is a rare recognition for a still active cricketer in the English game. Indeed Old Trafford's Brian Statham End was only so named several years after the Lancashire and England pace bowler great, a star of the 1950s and 1960s, had died.

For Anderson, born in the Lancashire town of Burnley and someone who has spent his entire career with the county, it was a shock late 35th birthday present. "I'm blown away, really, by the gesture from the club," he said.

"I can't quite believe it has happened. It is something that usually happens when people have stopped playing or are further down the line. So to have this happen when I'm still playing and potentially bowling from that end in the game, is a bit surreal."

But he insisted this honour should not be taken as a sign his career was winding down. "I don't like looking back on my career too much because I am still

playing and I still have things I want to achieve, personally and with this team," he said.

And for Anderson, who took 24 wickets during England's 2010/11 Test series victory in Australia, one of those targets is another Ashes triumph 'Down Under' when the side travel to their arch-rivals later this year. "I'd like to win the Ashes again," he said. "I think this team can achieve great things in the next couple of years and I'd like to be around to be a part of it and help the team improve. For me, that's what keeps me going and keeps me hungry to keep playing the game."

He added: "I've felt really good in this series. Barring me slipping in the shower or a back spasm overnight, I'll have played all four games. I've had a couple of injuries over the last 12-18 months so staying fit is a priority."

Meanwhile novice England captain Joe Root said of Anderson: "He is as good as ever. To have someone like that to go to when you are under the pump, when you want someone to change the game, is invaluable," explained Root, who added it was "great to hear" the overnight announcement that a contract row between Cricket Australia and their players, which threatened the Ashes, had been resolved.

Anderson's 480 wickets put him sixth in the list of Test cricketers' leading wicket-takers, with all the bowlers above him retired. Yet for all his success elsewhere, Anderson has still to take five wickets in a Test innings at Old Trafford.

"It's not always been a great ground for me with England but it would be nice if I can get on that (honours) board," said Anderson, who has 22 five-wicket hauls in 125 Tests to his credit. "But we have a series to win and we're in a great place," added Anderson, with England 2-1 up with one to play against South Africa.



Lancashire County Cricket Club Chairman David Hodgkiss (right) presents a portrait to England fast bowler James Anderson at the Old Trafford Cricket Ground in Manchester yesterday. (AFP)

SECOND TEST

# Ashwin strikes dent Sri Lanka reply after India pile up 622

AFP  
Colombo

Off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin claimed two early wickets to put India on top of the second Test after the visitors posted 622-9 declared against Sri Lanka in Colombo yesterday. Ashwin got rid of openers Upul Tharanga for nought and Dimuth Karunaratne for 25 to leave the hosts reeling at 50 for two at stumps on the second day.

Kusal Mendis on 16 and skipper Dinesh Chandimal on eight were batting at close of play with the hosts still trailing by 572 runs in their first innings at the Sinhalese Sports Club Ground. "Chandi and Kusal batted really well in the last few overs. We have to play positively," Karunaratne, who praised Ashwin's variations as a spinner, told reporters. "Last time when we played in Galle, Chandi got 160-odd scoring a lot of runs off the sweep and reverse sweep. I think that will be key."

Earlier six Indian batsmen scored 50 or more — including centuries by Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane — as the tourists posted their biggest total in Sri Lanka. Indian allrounder Ravindra Jadeja hit an unbeaten 70 as wicket-keeper-batsman Wriddhiman Saha made a patient 67 and Ashwin scored 54 before becoming Herath victims.

"Right now, it is a good thing that every batsman is scoring runs. Not only top five or six but also 7, 8, 9, 10," Rahane told reporters. "(Mohammed) Shami is also scoring a bit, Umesh



India's off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin (right) celebrates with his teammates after dismissing Sri Lankan batsman Upul Tharanga during the second Test in Colombo yesterday. (AFP)

(Yadav) was also batting well. So it is good that the last four are contributing," Rahane said.

However the 217-run fourth-wicket partnership between overnight centurions Pujara, who top-scored with 133, and Rahane remained the highlight of India's innings. "We thought if we dominate, if we change the momentum, they will be on the back foot straightaway, and that's what happened," Rahane said of the marathon stand. "We knew that one big partnership and they will be on the back foot," he added.

Veteran left-arm spinner Rangana Herath claimed four wickets for Sri Lanka, which suffered new injury worries after paceman Nuwan Pradeep left the field on day one with a pulled hamstring. Karunaratne informed that the hosts will not only miss Pradeep in the ongoing Test but the paceman will be out of action for "one or two months".

"We prepared this pitch to turn, that's why we've played only one seamer. Now with Nuwan's injury, there's no opportunity to get a wicket with the new ball, or through reverse swing when it gets older," said Karunaratne.

Debutant left-arm spinner Malinda Pushpakumara picked up two wickets. They included batsman Rahane for 132 — his maiden Test scalp — in the morning session. Part-time bowler Karunaratne claimed Pujara, who added just five runs to his overnight 128 but the damage was already done.

"I started my career as a bowler, not as a batsman, so I can bowl," said Karunaratne, who took his maiden Test wicket. India, who lead the three-match series 1-0, need a win to clinch the

series. The hosts need at least a draw to keep their hopes alive.

**SCOREBOARD INDIA 1ST INNINGS (OVERNIGHT 344/3)**

C. Pujara lbw b Karunaratne	133
A. Rahane st Dickwella b Pushpakumara	132
R. Ashwin b Herath	54
W. Saha st Dickwella b Herath	67
H. Pandya c Mathews b Pushpakumara	20
R. Jadeja not out	70
M. Shami c Tharanga b Herath	19
U. Yadav not out	8
Extras (b8, nb2, lb4)	14
<b>Total (9 wkts dec, 158 overs)</b>	<b>622</b>

**Bowling:** Pradeep 17-4-2-63-0, Herath 42-7-154-4, Karunaratne 8-0-3-11, Perera 40-3-14-1, Pushpakumara 38-2-156-2, De Silva 12-0-59-0.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-56 (Dhawan), 2-109 (Rahul), 3-133 (Kohli), 4-350 (Pujara), 5-413 (Rahane), 6-451 (Ashwin), 7-496 (Pandya), 8-568 (Saha), 9-598 (Shami)

**SRI LANKA I INNINGS**

D. Karunaratne c Rahane b Ashwin	25
U. Tharanga c Rahul b Ashwin	0
K. Mendis not out	16
D. Chandimal not out	8
Extras (lb1)	1
<b>Total (2 wickets; 20 overs)</b>	<b>50</b>

**Bowling:** Shami 3-1-7-0, Ashwin 10-2-38-2, Jadeja 7-4-4-0

**Fall of wicket:** 1-0 (Tharanga), 33-2 (Karunaratne)  
**Still to bat:** A. Mathews, D. de Silva, N. Dickwella, D. Perera, R. Herath, M. Pushpakumara, N. Pradeep  
**Sri Lanka trail by 572 runs in their first innings**

## TENNIS

# Anderson ousts top-seed Thiem as Nishikori wins

Next up for Anderson is 200th-ranked Indian qualifier Bhambri, who eliminated Argentina's Pella

AFP  
Washington

South Africa's Kevin Anderson upset top seed Dominic Thiem while Japanese second seed Kei Nishikori won a battle of past champions on Thursday to advance at the ATP Citi Open.

Anderson endured a three-hour rain delay and saved a match point before firing his 21st ace to finish off seventh-ranked Thiem 6-3, 6-7 (6/8), 7-6 (9/7) after two hours and 46 minutes and reach the Washington hardcourt quarter-finals. Thiem, in his first hardcourt tuneup for the US Open, fell to 0-6 lifetime against Anderson, all on hardcourts, but managed to swipe a set from his 45th-ranked nemesis for only the second time in his career.

Nishikori, the 2015 Washington winner, beat three-time champion Juan Martin Del Potro 6-4, 7-5, for only his second victory in seven matches against the Argentine 13th seed. It was the second early morning finish in as many matches for Nishikori, who faces US wildcard Tommy Paul next. Paul, who has never faced Nishikori, has ousted seventh seed Lucas Pouille and 11th seed Gilles Muller.

Russia's Daniil Medvedev upset Bulgarian fourth seed Grigor Dimitrov 6-4, 6-2, to reach a last-match matchup with Germany's eighth-ranked Alexander Zverev, who beat American Tennys Sandgren 7-5, 7-5 just before 2 am after killing time with a nap and video games. Anderson saved a match point when Thiem netted a backhand to level the last tie-breaker at 6-6, then hit a forehand winner to set up a match point that Thiem erased with a service winner. But Thiem sent a backhand wide on the penultimate point and Anderson blasted an ace wide to reach his fourth Washington quarter-final, matching his best result.

After an early exchange of third-set

breaks, Anderson double faulted on a break point to hand Thiem a 4-3 edge. But Thiem was broken in the 10th game while serving for the match. Next up for Anderson is 200th-ranked Indian qualifier Yuki Bhambri, who eliminated Argentina's 100th-ranked Guido Pella 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 6-1.

Canadian third seed Milos Raonic, the 2014 Washington champion, defeated Cypriot Marcos Baghdatis 7-6 (9/7), 6-3 to book a quarter-final against US eighth seed Jack Sock, who downed countryman Jared Donaldson 7-6 (8/6), 6-2.

## HALEP BEATS THE HEAT, PETKOVIC BOUNCES BOUCHARD

In the women's event, World number two Simona Halep battled through extreme heat to reach the quarter-finals while Canada's Eugenie Bouchard was ousted by Germany's Andrea Petkovic. French Open runner-up Halep, the top-seeded woman on the Washington hardcourts, rallied past Colombia's Mariana Duque-Marino 3-6, 6-4, 6-2 in withering heat she measured at 47 Celsius (116 F) on the court.

World number 102 Petkovic, a former top-10 player and French Open semi-finalist on the comeback trail, ousted 73rd-ranked Bouchard 6-2, 4-6, 6-0. Petkovic advanced to a quarter-final against 17-year-old Canadian Bianca Andreescu, who won her first WTA main draw matches this week, including Thursday's 6-2, 6-3 triumph over French second seed Kristina Mladenovic. It was the first time in WTA history a player born in the 21st Century had beaten a top-20 player.

Another quarter-final will see German fourth seed Julia Goerges against Romanian sixth seed Monica Niculescu, who eliminated compatriot Patricia Maria Tig 6-4, 7-6 (7/2). Germany's Sabine Lisicki defeated Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka 4-6, 6-3, 6-3. Lisicki will face French fifth seed Oceane Dodin in another quarter-final.



Kevin Anderson of South Africa hits a backhand during his win over Dominic Thiem of Austria at the Citi Open in Washington on Thursday. (USA TODAY Sports)

## Injured Wawrinka to miss US Open title defence

Paris: Reigning US Open champion Stan Wawrinka will miss his title defence to have knee surgery, the world number four announced yesterday. The three-time Grand Slam champion had already pulled out of the upcoming ATP tournaments in Canada and Cincinnati, and joins last year's US Open runner-up Novak Djokovic on the sidelines for the rest of the season.

The 32-year-old Wawrinka, like Djokovic, will be hoping the time off can help him come back revitalised after a difficult month that included a first-round exit at Wimbledon. On Thursday, Wawrinka admitted that the knee injury had hampered him during that shock defeat to unseeded Russian Daniil Medvedev in London.

## DISAPPOINTMENT AS DAVIS CUP REFORM FLOPS

The head of tennis's governing body expressed disappointment yesterday as a key move to revamp the Davis Cup and Fed Cup competitions failed to win approval. International Tennis Federation (ITF) president David Haggerty said he had concerns over the futures of the historic tournaments after the unsuccessful attempt to cut singles matches from five to three sets.

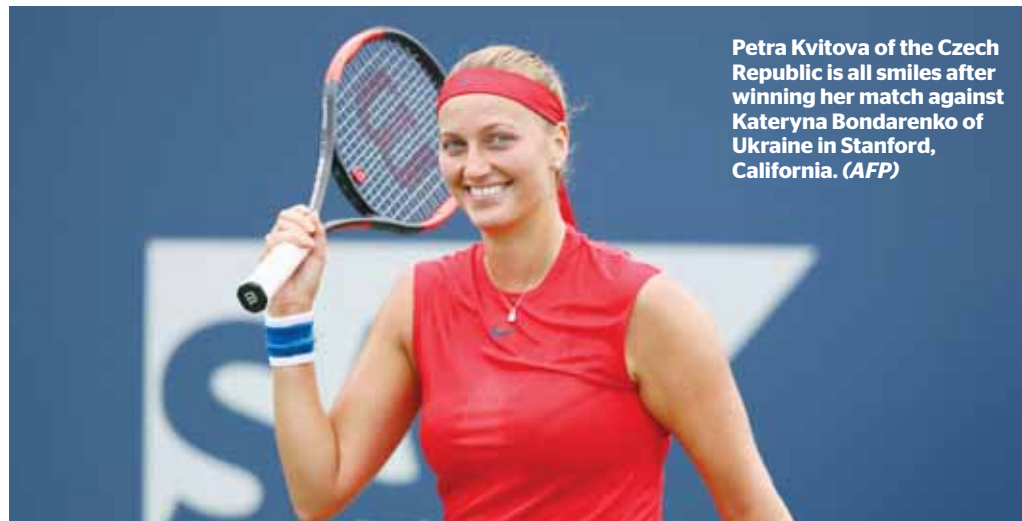
The ITF's annual general meeting in Ho Chi Minh City approved three other measures, and 63.54% of voters backed the move to three tie-break sets — just short of the two-thirds majority required. "We respect the decision of the AGM but are disappointed that our member nations have not approved the full package of Davis Cup and Fed Cup reforms endorsed by the ITF Board," Haggerty said in a statement.

Reducing singles matches to three sets had been seen as important to make the men's and women's international team competitions more viewer-friendly in a congested sports schedule. The 117-year-old Davis Cup and the Fed Cup, which dates from 1963, often struggle to attract the spotlight in a sport which focuses on the four Grand Slam tournaments and has busy men's and women's tours.

The ITF meeting approved a move to give Davis and Fed Cup finalists the choice of hosting their first-round ties the following year. The availability of match and practice courts was reduced to make hosting cheaper, while Davis Cup pre-tie player commitments were cut to a single function combining the draw, media interviews and an official lunch.

## SPOTLIGHT

## Kvitova breezes past Bondarenko at Stanford Open



Petra Kvitova of the Czech Republic is all smiles after winning her match against Katerina Bondarenko of Ukraine in Stanford, California. (AFP)

AFP  
Los Angeles

Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova cruised to a 6-2, 6-2 victory over Katerina Bondarenko at the WTA Stanford tournament on Thursday, setting up a quarter-final clash with American teenager Cici Bellis. The second-seeded wildcard entrant needed just 60 minutes on the court, finishing with 31 winners and 10 unforced errors, while Ukraine's Bondarenko had just 11 winners and 11 unforced errors. "I served very well, and I was just trying to play my game," Kvitova said. "Sometimes that works, sometimes not."

Katerina is a dangerous player. She can catch lots of balls and I knew that I had to be focused and just play aggressive."

Bondarenko, who is ranked 111th in the world, was tied 2-2 in the first set, but Kvitova then

grabbed control of the match. Asked about her chances going forward, Kvitova said, "Well, I don't really care about my chances. I'm glad that I got a wildcard, and to have more matches. I really didn't stay long in Wimbledon. That's why I decided to play. I wanted more tournaments before Toronto."

Kvitova, 27, lost in the second round at Wimbledon last month. She next faces the 18-year-old Bellis, who got past Veronica Cepede Royq of Paraguay 7-6 (7/3), 6-2. Eighth seed Bellis had trouble finishing Cepede Royq off in the opening set.

Bellis took a 5-1 lead and had three set points at 5-2. But Cepede Royq rallied and had two set points herself with Bellis serving at 5-6 before the American took charge and dominated the rest of the way.

Elsewhere, fourth-seeded Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova of Russia defeated Alison Riske of the United States 6-4, 6-0. The American took a 3-2 lead but Pavlyuchenkova dominated thereafter.

## WGC-BRIDGESTONE

## Belgian Pieters seizes early lead

AFP  
Los Angeles

Belgian Thomas Pieters sank a 31-foot birdie putt on his final hole to fire a five-under 65 and take a one-shot lead after the first round of the WGC-Bridgestone Invitational on Thursday. The 25-year-old Pieters rolled in five birdies on the day including his long putt on the par-four, 494-yard No. 9 as he leads Russell Knox by one shot.

Reigning British Open champion Jordan Spieth and Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy, who split with his long-time caddie this week, are part of a group of six that shot 67s and are two shots back in Akron, Ohio.

Kevin Kisner, Bubba Watson, Britain's Ross Fisher and Spain's Jon Rahm also shot 67s. Dustin Johnson, Adam Scott and Adam Hadwin are among a half dozen golfers at 68. Pieters is the highest-ranked Belgian golfer ever at world number 34.

He is playing on the PGA Tour as a Special Temporary Member this season. He fashioned together a crisp bogey-free round at the Firestone Country Club course. "I only had two putts from above the hole, the rest of them were pretty straight-forward putts," said Pieters, who hit four of 14 fairways. "I managed to find a lot of greens today. That was important as well. It was kind of a stress-free round on my back nine."

Knox made bogey on his final hole, spoiling his chance to tie Pieters for the lead. Spieth is coming off wins at the Travelers Championship and the British Open. "I really scrambled nicely and made a couple nice long putts in the middle of the round," said



Thomas Pieters of Belgium putts on the ninth green during the first round of the World Golf Championships Bridgestone Invitational in Akron, Ohio, on Thursday. (AFP)

Spieth, who finished with five birdies and two bogeys. "When my pace starts to feel good and I start to get dialed in, that is when I know I am hitting it good."

McIlroy is competing in his first tournament since sacking his caddie for the past nine years, J.P.

Fitzgerald. McIlroy, who has struggled this season, is hoping the caddie change produces results and so far the early returns are good. Harry Diamond served as McIlroy's caddie on Thursday.

"It was good. Little weird at the start," said McIlroy, who had five birdies and two bogeys. "It's been nine years since I had someone different on my bag."

"I'm taking a little bit more responsibility on myself and there were a couple of times where I probably should have hit another club, but that's on me, not anyone else. "I'd much rather be frustrated at my own decision than someone else's." Phil Mickelson and Australian Jason Day both shot 71 and are tied for 33rd.

## FOCUS

## NBA MVP Curry fires respectable 74 in professional golf debut

AFP  
Los Angeles

NBA star Stephen Curry got off to a rocky start but then held his own on Thursday in his professional golf debut, shooting a four-over 74 in the first round of the Web.com Tour's Ellie Mae Classic.

The two-time NBA Most Valuable Player, who in June helped the Golden State Warriors to their second NBA title in three seasons, is playing the event on a sponsor's exemption. Curry stood 11 strokes back of the leader Nicholas Thompson but managed to make three birdies and several difficult shots on the challenging Stonebrae course in Hayward, California. Curry got off to an inauspicious start as he began his round on the back nine.

His drive at the 10th hole landed in the cupholder of a golf cart sitting left of the fairway and he scrambled to make bogey on the hole. "My first shot on the tour was in the cup, not in the right cup," Curry joked. "That was probably a first on the tour. There was a golf cart just left of my target on hole number one. It went right in the cup holder. Not an ideal way to start, having to call a rules official over, but I settled in after that."

Curry finished with three birdies, five bogeys, one double bogey and nine pars. He hit eight of 18 fairways while needing 27 putts and posted a better score than eight players in the morning session. "It was a day of firsts for everything," Curry said. "First opportunity to play with these guys, first tee shot was crazy, first par I made trying to settle in and then obviously the first birdie was a really cool moment."

Curry said he was nervous on the first tee and compared it to the pressure of a NBA contest. "The



Stephen Curry reacts after missing a putt during Ellie Mae Classic in Hayward, California. (AFP)

feeling is the same," he said. "The adrenaline rush is there but you have a whole lot more time to think about what is going on. The best guys out here are able to master those thoughts for five hours."

"Soon as he said my name on the first tee I could barely feel my hands I had to take a deep breath. After third or fourth hole, it was just golf like normal." Among the players Curry finished ahead of was two-time PGA Tour winner Frank Lickliter. "If you told me I was going to shoot 74 on the first round I would take that all day every day," he said. Asked if he was going to make the weekend cut, Curry said, "I got the jitters out. Hopefully that will happen."

BASEBALL

# Kluber goes from 2-seamer to 4-seamer to three-hit Yankees

'He's able to make adjustments that I haven't seen many pitchers do'

By Paul Hoynes  
Advance Ohio Media (TNS)

The thing that Yan Gomes likes about Corey Kluber is his ability to take a game plan, turn it upside down, but still make it work.

Kluber lives off his two-seam fastball and curveball/slider. Those are the two pitches he's thrown the most this season. Those are the pitches that have helped him strikeout eight or more batters in 12 straight games this year.

Thursday night, in the Indians' 5-1 win over the Yankees, he changed things a bit. He dusted off his four-seam fastball and rode it to a three-hit complete game win.

"He's able to make adjustments that I haven't seen many pitchers, even on the other side, do," said Gomes, Kluber's catcher. "Like tonight, he was throwing his four-seamer more than he has before. Everybody talks about his two-seamer and curveball, and he still put guys away with that, but getting ahead with the four-seamer, especially against some of their good lefties, you don't expect him to do that."

Kluber, according to Statcast, threw his four-seam fastball 12.5 percent of the time this season going into Thursday's start. Thursday night he threw it 28.3 percent of the time. Thirty of the 106 pitches Kluber threw were four-seamers.

"He told me, 'I don't know if they thought I didn't have a four-seamer,' because they were taking a bunch of them," said Gomes. "It's one of those things that when something starts working, don't stop it, just keep going."

Said Kluber, "Tonight maybe after the first time through the order, it just seemed like it was getting up on them a little bit. I'm not sure if they were ready for the two-seamer or just had some good life on it tonight. You could kind of tell that after the first time through the order it was getting on them a little quicker than they thought."

Kluber threw 68 percent of his 106 pitches for strikes. In 12 starts since coming off the disabled list, Kluber has thrown fewer than 66 percent strikes in just one start. The major-league average for a starting pitcher is 63 percent strikes.



Cleveland Indians Corey Kluber throws a pitch against the New York Yankees during the first inning of their MLB game at Progressive Field in Cleveland, Ohio, on Thursday. (USA TODAY Sports)

Thursday night the Indians took a 2-0 lead in the first inning thanks to three New York errors. Kluber protected the early lead as he threw a three-hitter for his third complete game of the season.

"Honestly, from the first pitch you always think he's going to go deep into the game," said Gomes. "Sometimes you'll see some of his pitches start to back up, but he's able to come up with another pitch and make it the best pitch of his day."

"He knows how to pitch with a lead. Whenever we get a lead, he pounds the zone and goes right after it. It just helps him that his pound-the-zone pitches are pretty nasty."

Gomes greets every pitcher he catches after each inning and walks back to the dugout with him. They talk strategy between innings, but during the game it's a different story.

"I usually try to take care of that part," said Gomes, when asked about who does the talking on the field. "I don't want him thinking out there."

Thinking is one thing. Pitching is another.

Kluber is 6-1 with a 1.77 ERA (17 earned runs in 86 1/3 innings) since being activated on June 1. He's struck out 131, walked 15 and allowed 79 hits. He is averaging 13.7 strikeouts per nine innings and 1.6 walks per nine innings.

Gomes, especially, knows you don't get in the way of that. You just let it happen.

RESULTS

San Francisco	11	Oakland	2
LA Angels	5	Philadelphia	4
Kansas City	6	Seattle	4
Tampa Bay	5	Houston	3
Texas	4	Minnesota	1
LA Dodgers	7	Atlanta	4
Boston	9	Chicago White Sox	5
Cleveland	5	NY Yankees	1
Pittsburgh	6	Cincinnati	0
Detroit	7	Baltimore	5
Colorado	5	NY Mets	4
Arizona	10	Chicago Cubs	8
Milwaukee	2	St. Louis	1

ATHLETICS

# Merritt bids for golden climax to miraculous journey

AFP  
London

Aries Merritt thought he had run his last race two years ago as he underwent a kidney transplant, but against the odds he is a contender to add the 110-metre hurdles world title to his 2012 Olympic gold.

The 32-year-old American — who enjoyed a memorable year in 2012 by taking gold in London and then breaking the world record with a time of 12.80 seconds — has shown some smart form this campaign.

He returned to winning ways, including in the London Diamond League meet on the same track where he won the Olympic title and where he will bid to win the world crown.

Victory in London might even outdo Merritt's bronze in the 2015 world final in Beijing when he was just days away from the transplant — the kidney donated by his older sister LaToya Hubbard.

"A lot of it was because I thought it was probably going to be my last time running ever again," Merritt told the *New York Times* last year, referring to the effort he put into winning bronze in Beijing.

"And so I just pulled a rabbit out of a hat, essentially."

The slightly-built Merritt's performance in China even had Les-



lie Thomas, his kidney specialist at the famed Mayo Clinic, in awe of the achievement.

"He had almost no kidney function, terribly anaemic, running against the Chinese fog or smog, and he came in third!" Thomas told *Sports Illustrated* in 2016.

"Don't you think that's amazing? I mean, that's, like, crazy."

LaToya said she didn't think twice about donating her kidney to Merritt, whose illness was a rare congenital kidney disease called collapsing focal segmental glomerulosclerosis (FSGS), first diagnosed in 2013.

'YOU CAN'T GIVE UP HOPE'

Indeed back then she was pregnant, with her daughter Lela, but contemplated terminating her pregnancy so as to donate her kidney — however that radical step was avoided as Merritt's condition improved enough to delay the procedure.

"I'm not going to say I was disappointed," Hubbard told the *New York Times* last year.

"It was more like, wow, what can I do to help my brother? I just decided to do what I could do."

Merritt, who despite a lack of race fitness only narrowly missed out on a place

in last year's Olympic team, says LaToya has always been there for him even in the early days it was tough love.

"She was really tough on me as a kid, growing up as an African-American in Atlanta, in the ghetto; well, not in the ghetto, but not in a rich area," he told *Sports Illustrated*. "It was tough and she made me see things I wouldn't normally see. She toughened me up for the harsh reality of the world in the USA. I love my sister to death."

Their mother, though, intervened to get LaToya to ease up on her brother. "When I'm gone, it'll only be you two," she told the *Washington Post*.

"You have to look out for each other."

LaToya took the message to heart and Merritt, who had to undergo further surgery later in 2015 to have the kidney pushed deeper inside his body, could reward her extraordinary gesture with gold in London.

Indeed Merritt's mindset has completely changed from two years ago when he contemplated life without athletics.

"I was told, 'you'll never come back to the sport with the medications you have to take that are life long,'" said Merritt, who will take three different medicines daily for the rest of his life.

"It was something that went in one ear and out the other. No matter what someone may tell you, whether it's a doctor or not, you can't give up hope. You always have to stay positive and look at the brighter picture."

NFL

# Baby goats for GOAT — five-time Super Bowl champ Brady turns 40

AFP  
New York

Five baby goats were brought to training camp practice Thursday by the reigning Super Bowl champion New England Patriots as the NFL club celebrated superstar quarterback Tom Brady's 40th birthday.

Brady, a five-time Super Bowl champion with the Patriots, has often been tagged with the term "GOAT" as an abbreviation for "Greatest Of All Time" and he celebrated this birthday as he has many others, with a workout at the Patriots training camp.

Each baby goat wore a Patriots jersey bearing the number 12 worn by Brady with a huge "GOAT" sign displayed in tribute to Brady.

Brady also received a tribute on In-

stagram from his supermodel wife, Gisele Bundchen.

"Over 10 years ago I fell in love with you because of your beautiful and sensitive heart," Bundchen wrote. "I love the sweetness in your essence. Today you are starting a big new chapter and I wish you so much happiness and fulfillment in all aspects of your life."

"Happy birthday my love! Making 40 feel like 20!!! You go @tombrady!!!! Te amo!"

For his part, Brady used social media to wish twin sister Julie a happy birthday. "When you share the same birthday...and also great fashion style! Happy birthday sweet Julie! I love you!" Brady wrote. "Thank you for being the best second oldest sister in the world!"

The Patriots open their pre-season schedule with a home game next Thursday against Jacksonville.



NBA

# League owners approve Detroit Pistons move to downtown arena

AFP  
New York

NBA club owners unanimously voted Thursday to approve the Detroit Pistons moving their home court from suburban Auburn Hills to a new downtown arena they will share with the NHL Detroit Red Wings.

A new \$863mn facility, the Little Caesars Arena, will mark the team's return to the downtown area of the US Motor City.

The Pistons spent 29 seasons in The Palace of Auburn Hills, notably the site of the 2004 "Malice in the Palace" brawl that broke out in the final seconds of a 92-87 Indiana victory over

Detroit. What began as a fight between several players escalated after a spectator threw a drink onto Indiana's Ron Artest, who charged into the stands after the assailant to spark a wild melee involving fans and players in the stands and on the court.

Nine players were suspended for a combined 146 games as a result of the incident, Artest missing the most with an 86-game ban that latest the remainder of the season.

Five fans faced criminal charges and were banned for life from Pistons home games.

The Pistons agreed to the move to the new arena in November. NBA owners recently concluded analysing the Pistons' new 35-year lease deal.

## Cowboys defeat Cardinals in Hall of Fame Game

Sam Irwin-Hill kicked a 43-yard field goal in the fourth quarter as the Dallas Cowboys defeated the Arizona Cardinals 20-18 in the Hall of Fame Game on Thursday. The Cowboys fell behind 15-0 in the first quarter before rallying in a pre-season exhibition contest where the teams combined for 19 penalties for 169 yards at Hall of Fame Stadium in Canton, Ohio. Neither team played its stars or many of its starters, instead giving playing time to backups and individuals trying to earn a spot on the 53-man regular season rosters. Arizona quarterback Blaine Gabbert had a strong game, completing 11 of 14 passes for 185 yards. Cowboys backup quarterback Kellen Moore got the ball in the right spots, completing 12 of 17 passes for 182 yards with one touchdown and an interception. Irwin-Hill kicked two field goals and Cooper Rush also tossed a touchdown to Uzoma Nwachukwu for the Cowboys.

## Dolphins quarterback Tannehill injures left knee in practice

Miami Dolphins quarterback Ryan Tannehill suffered a left knee injury during practice Thursday, leaving the NFL club pondering options and awaiting MRI results. The 29-year-old signal caller was running toward the sidelines when he went down without being hit. Trainers examined his brace-bolstered left knee before taking him off the field for evaluation. Tannehill sustained sprained ligaments in the same knee last season, missing Miami's final three regular-season games and a playoff loss to Pittsburgh, but he did not undergo surgery. Tannehill, selected eighth overall in the 2012 NFL Draft, threw for 2,995 yards and 19 touchdowns in 13 games last year. Backup Matt Moore, who took over for Tannehill in practice with the starting lineup, went 2-2 replacing Tannehill last season. Replacement talk should Tannehill's injury threaten his season could include former San Francisco quarterback Colin Kaepernick and retired Jay Cutler, now a television commentator. Controversial Kaepernick, 29, has been without a team since opting out of his contract with the 49ers in early March, sparking talk that NFL owners might be keeping him out deliberately after his decision to kneel during pre-game playings of the US national anthem to raise awareness for social injustice.

## FOOTBALL

# QSL clubs continue with pre-season camps

Al Ahli started their training camp in the Dutch city of Mierlo



Newly-formed Qatar Stars League side Al Duhail lost 3-2 to Italian side Bologna in the third friendly of their pre-season camp in Austria.

QNA  
Doha

Qatar Stars League (QSL) clubs continue their preparations for the 2017-18 season, which kicks off in mid-September featuring 12 clubs after the Qatar Football Association's decision to decrease the number from 14.

Al Ahli started their training camp in the Dutch city of Mierlo, which will continue until Aug 21. They are set to play five friendlies during the camp. The club appointed Spaniard Joaquin Caparras as their new manager after Youssef Adam resigned at the end of the last season.

Al Ahli announced the signing of Co-

lombian striker Cristian Nazarit on a renewable one-year contract. The club have also signed former El Jaish player Majed Mohammed in addition to Fadh Omar from Qatar SC, Spanish player Francisco Sandaza, Mozambican defender Simao Mate and South Korean midfielder Kim Gwi-hyeon.

Meanwhile, Al Duhail lost 3-2 to Italian side Bologna in the third friendly of their pre-season camp in Austria. Duhail had lost 2-4 to Hannover 96 in the first friendly and drew 1-1 with Kayserispor in the second. They recently signed Bassam Hisham from Al Rayyan on a four-season contract.

Al Arabi are carrying out stamina tests for their players during their current camp in Slovenia in order to learn about

the physical levels of the players and decide whether to increase or decrease the training load ahead of the new season.

Al Khor left on Thursday for Amsterdam as they hold a training camp in the Dutch city of Zwolle that lasts until August 22 and features a number of friendly matches.

Head Coach Laurent Banide aims to achieve maximum benefit from the camp in order to prepare the team in the best possible way at the start of the season.

The club recently signed Brazilian striker David da Silva on a one-year deal from Kuwait's Qadsia. They also previously signed Soroush Rafiei and Luciano Castan, while Brazilian midfielder Madson will continue with the club.

Qatar SC beat Al Khor in the friendly

that they played as part of their preparations for the new season. Led by Argentine coach Gabriel Calderon, Qatar SC are aiming to raise the levels of harmony and learn about the readiness of their players before they go on a training camp in Slovenia on Aug 9.

Meanwhile, Al Markhiya have signed Al Ahli's former coach Adam to replace Italian coach Silvio Diliberto. They signed Gambian midfielder Tijan Jaiteh and local young goalkeeper Fahd Youness Ahmed.

Al Markhiya are looking to have a strong presence as they return to the top flight after several seasons in the lower division. The club will warm up for the new season with a camp in the Bulgarian capital of Sofia that starts on Aug 22, during which they play three friendlies.

## BOXING

# Joshua ordered to defend WBA title against Ortiz

Reuters  
London

The World Boxing Association (WBA) has ordered world heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua to defend his title against Cuba's Luis Ortiz, the organisation said yesterday.

The 27-year-old Briton, who also holds the IBF and IBO titles, had been due to face Wladimir Klitschko in a rematch of their April bout that Joshua won via an 11th round knockout but the Ukrainian announced his retirement on Thursday.

"Both parties (Joshua and Ortiz) were duly notified that, as of August 3rd, they have 30 days to reach an agreement or the fight will be called to purse bids," the WBA said in a statement.

Joshua, undefeated in 19 bouts, has also been told he must face IBF mandatory challenger Kubrat Pulev of Bulgaria before Dec. 2 or risk being stripped of that belt. The 38-year-old Ortiz is also unbeaten, recording 23 knockouts in 27 career wins, and is a former WBA interim world champion. Former champion Klitschko, who made 23 world title defences during his glittering career, has backed the Briton to lead the next generation of heavyweight fighters. "My HEART is at PEACE as I pass the torch to @anthonyjoshua - the next generation. Good luck little bro, I'm proud of you!" the 41-year-old posted on Twitter.

## KHAN AND JOSHUA IN TWITTER INFIDELITY ROW

Meanwhile, Anthony Joshua and his fellow British boxer Amir Khan became embroiled in an explosive Twitter spat yesterday after Khan appeared to accuse Joshua of having a relationship with his wife.

Khan, who is currently on hol-

iday in Dubai, said he was splitting up with his American wife, Faryal Makhdoom Khan, and suggested she had got together with Joshua.

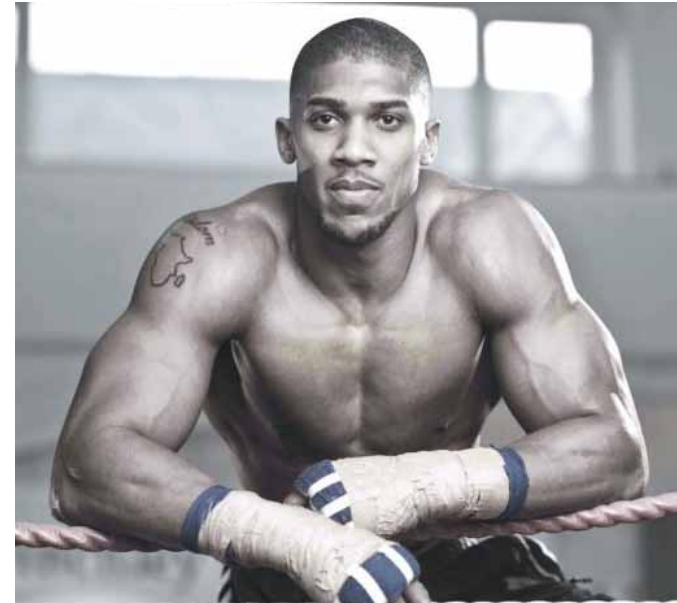
Joshua, the reigning world heavyweight champion, and Makhdoom both responded by denying the accusations, with Makhdoom accusing Khan of being unfaithful. "Faryal moved on quick," Khan wrote on Twitter. "Always mentioned to me how much she wanted to be with another guy, from all people another boxer @anthonyjoshua."

In subsequent tweets, former light-welterweight champion Khan added: "Left my family and friends for this Faryal. I'm not hurt but another fighter. I'm making it public. You getting the divorce #Golddigger. Mans like Joshua can have my left overs!"

Makhdoom, a model, hit back: "Accusing other boxers just because your boxing career is finished. Man up amir. After all these years. I've always defending (sic) a cheat, always stuck around for him, always had his back. And I'm called a gold digger?"

Joshua responded by posting a clip of the song 'It Wasn't Me' by Shaggy, in which the protagonist tries to dodge accusations of infidelity. He added: "Bantz (banter) aside, I hope you guys can resolve your situation or this is a hack as we have never even met! Plus I like my women BBW (Big Beautiful Women) #ItWasntMe."

Khan and his wife have a history of airing their dirty linen in public. Last year Makhdoom, 26, took to another social media forum, snapchat, to blast Khan's family, accusing them of abusing and bullying her. Khan, 30, responded by telling his wife and family to try harder to get along. But he and Makhdoom also appeared on British daytime television in January to discuss rumours about his infidelity and a sex tape he appeared in.



World heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua of Britain also holds the IBF and IBO titles.

## FOCUS

# Qatar's beach volleyball pair bow out of Worlds

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

Qatar's beach volleyball team of Jefferson Pereira and Cherif Younousse bowed out of the World Championship in Vienna yesterday. The Qatari pair lost their round of 16 match to hosts' Austrian pair of Clemens Doppler and Alexander Horst 24-26, 22-24.

The 12th seeded Austrians, on the back of support from the home crowd avenged a 2-1 loss to Qatar at the 2015 FIVB World Championships in the only previous FIVB World Tour meeting between the two teams. Austria advanced to the quarterfinals and will play Piotr Kantor and Bartosz Losiak of Poland. Qatar has been eliminated and finishes 9th.

Qatar's Younousse was disappointed with the loss and said he and his partner failed to keep their nerves and close out a close first game. "We had a good start. We were so anxious to finish the game. Austrian's were more relaxed than us. My block and my partner's defence wasn't as good," he said.

"I only made two blocks, and I usually make four minimum. The thing we need is to finish a game. At the beginning of

Qatar's beach volleyball duo Jefferson Pereira and Cherif Younousse celebrate a point during the World Championship in Vienna yesterday.



the pool nobody expected we'd be first or that we would be in the round of 16. In the World Championships we finished fifth. I think we could have done better but today wasn't our day. Our main goal was to qualify for the semifinals," he added.

## QATAR BEAT UAE IN ARAB YOUTH VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Qatar's youth volleyball team defeated their UAE counterparts yesterday at the Arab Youth Volleyball Championship in Jordanian capital Amman. Qatar secured

the fifth place after winning the game 3-1 (25/23, 25/15, 13/25 and 25/17).

The head of the Qatari delegation to the Arab Championship, Khalid al-Kaabi said the Qatari youth team is future of country's volleyball.

## RUGBY

# Seven rookies in Australia squad for All Blacks opener

Reuters  
Sydney

Australia coach Michael Cheika said his revamp of the Wallabies was "in a good place" yesterday after he named seven uncapped players in his squad for the Rugby Championship opener against New Zealand. Looking to overhaul the ageing squad that reached the 2015 World Cup final, Cheika handed debuts to 13 players last season with five more blooded in the international window in June.

To those could now be added hooker Jordan

Uelese, flanker Adam Korczyk and lock Izack Rodda as well as outside backs Izaia Perese, Billy Meakes, Marika Koroiobete and Curtis Rona, the latter two bolstering the contingent of rugby league converts.

Cheika said all of them would be contending for spots in the team for the Aug. 19 clash at Sydney's Olympic Stadium, the first of two meetings in two weeks with the All Blacks to open the southern hemisphere tournament.

The squad naming came a few days after flanker Michael Hooper was installed as Wallabies captain in place of Stephen Moore and yesterday Cheika also announced experienced

halfbacks Will Genia and Bernard Foley as his vice captains. "Since the start of 2016, we've started turning the list around and I think we're in a good space with that right now," Cheika told reporters. "We've got a new leadership in now and there's still a few players coming back to join on the journey for the next couple of years."

"But at the same time, the guys that started last year are starting to get into the double digits, the 20s, of test experience, which is essential. So any newer players we bring in over the next year or two will just fit into that environment and the standards of the players who are in there."

The chances of the four uncapped backs in

the squad making the matchday 23 were lessened by Cheika's confidence that centre Samu Kerevi and utility Kurtley Beale would be fit after pectoral and hamstring injuries respectively. Australia's results have undoubtedly suffered during the rebuilding period with nine losses from 15 matches in 2016 and a shock defeat to Scotland in June.

While the first of three Bledisloe Cup tests this year against the world champions might not look like the best environment to introduce players to test rugby, Cheika was satisfied it would not be a gamble.

"There's no risk, if a guy's in the squad he's

ready to play," Cheika added.

## SQUAD:

Forwards – Allan Alaalatoa, Rory Arnold, Adam Coleman, Jack Dempsey, Kane Douglas, Tetera Faulkner, Ned Hanigan, Michael Hooper (captain), Sekope Kepu, Adam Korczyk, Sean McMahon, Stephen Moore, Tataru Polota-Nau, Tom Robertson, Izack Rodda, Rob Simmons, Scott Sio, Lopeti Timani, Jordan Uelese.  
Backs – Kurtley Beale, Israel Folau, Bernard Foley, Will Genia, Dane Haylett-Petty, Reece Hodge, Samu Kerevi, Marika Koroiobete, Tevita Kuridrani, Billy Meakes, Izaia Perese, Nick Phipps, Joe Powell, Curtis Rona, Henry Speight.

## Dovizioso fastest in practice

Brno, Czech Republic: Andrea Dovizioso posted the fastest time over yesterday's two Czech MotoGP practice sessions as world championship leader Marc Marquez struggled down in 10th.

Italian Dovizioso was leading the standings ahead of last month's German Grand Prix when an eighth-placed finish saw him drop to third overall between reigning world champion Marquez and his Spanish compatriot Maverick Vinales.

But Ducati's Dovizioso was back in form as he notched a

best lap of 1min 56.332sec to lead German Jonas Folger by 0.398sec, with Italian Danilo Petrucci third at 0.419 on the Brno circuit.

Three-time world champion Marquez, who had said earlier this week he'd be happy with a podium finish in Brno, was 0.877 off the pace, just ahead of Vinales (0.957) in 11th.

Seven-time world MotoGP champion Valentino Rossi, who is fourth in the overall standings, just 10 points behind Marquez, could manage only 14th, more than a second off Dovizioso's time.



## FOCUS

# 'Tannie Ans', the great-grandma turned supercoach

Van Niekerk's 75-year-old coach has worked wonders with South African

Reuters  
London

Ans Botha's transformation from one minute being a 75-year-old cooing over her 10-month-old great grandson to the next playing 'supercoach' to the greatest new talent in athletics is one of sport's more extraordinary makeovers.

Yet as Wayde Van Niekerk runs the 400 metres heats at the World Athletics Championships in London today, eyeing more athletics landmarks, he would not want anyone but this "amazing woman" to be guiding him.

Botha has three children, five grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. "Oh yes, I'm a great-grandmother – but not of Wayde!" she laughs, when asked how they gel with their 50-year age gap.

South African Van Niekerk says he teases his Namibian mentor for her stubborn ways and Botha gives him old-fashioned looks about his blaring music. "She's strict," smiles Van Niekerk, yet, clearly, their relationship comes with deep affection, trust and respect.

It has worked famously in the five years since Van Niekerk enrolled at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein and asked to join the training group of Botha, their athletics coach of 25 years.

Under her tutelage, not only has he become a world record breaker and Olympic champion at 400 metres, clocking 43.03 seconds in Rio last year, but also the only man ever to break 10 seconds for 100m, 20secs for 200m and 44secs for 400m.

In London, he could become the first man since Michael Johnson in 1995 to achieve the 200m/400m double at the world championships.

Botha smiles that, actually, like the rest of her training group, she cannot help but see Van Niekerk like one of her "children".

From schoolchildren to veterans, they all call her 'Tannie Ans' – Auntie Ans in Afrikaans.



Olympic champion Wayde Van Niekerk (left) of South Africa with his coach Ans Botha. (Twitter)

"There are 32 of them and I treat them the same. They're an exceptional group of children," she said in an interview with Reuters.

"Wayde really loves to be in the group because they're like a family. When he has to train on his own, he always complains 'Tannie, I'm alone, I want my friends, my other athletes here with me.'"

Van Niekerk's dramatic rise over the past year has proved a real culture shock for Botha, finding herself at the centre of a media fuss.

After a fifty-year self-taught coaching career which began back in Namibia when she couldn't find a coach for her daughter Herma, Botha, once a long jumper and sprinter herself, said: "In a way, it's a really difficult experi-

ence for me at 75.

"In another way, I'm still the same person, still a great grandmother who loves gardening and all my other activities. So it's not made any difference to me as a human being.

"It is physically demanding at my age but I enjoy it. I'm walking a lot and then stretching. I've found when you have the enthusiasm and the love and passion for something, it's no big issue.

"I'm just so blessed and am so grateful to do the things I love at my time of life."

Van Niekerk feels blessed to have her guiding him too.

"She's an amazing woman," he told reporters on Wednesday. "I don't think she's as scary as some people

think but she is a tough lady.

"She's fixed in a lot of her ways but if you approach her with love and respect, then you can win her heart quite easily.

"Once you step on the wrong side then you can find it's quite difficult to win her over. I haven't stepped over that mark, but I do like to tease her which she is not used to."

The ageless Botha loves guiding Van Niekerk, but what does she prefer – being the perfect coach or the perfect great grandma?

"I think it's both. When I have the opportunity to be with my family, I try to make it really, really quality time," she smiled, before adding with a glint in her eyes: "Yet when I'm busy coaching, I have a one-track mind."

## PRELIMINARY ROUND

## Semenya safely off on double quest at Worlds

AFP  
London

South African Caster Semenya racked up a season's best as she safely negotiated the first round of the women's 1500m in her audacious bid for a world championships middle-distance double yesterday.

Semenya came in second behind Ethiopia's defending champion Genzebe Dibaba, who won the heat in 4min 02.67sec, with the South African at 0.17sec.

"I am in good condition," said Dibaba. "Last year I had injuries but I am good now."

"The event is very strong with Sifan (Hassan) and Caster, so it will be a very fast race I think."

Semenya is back in the spotlight following a study funded by the IAAF and WADA that showed female athletes with naturally high levels of testosterone enjoy a competitive advantage of up to 4.5% over their rivals.

The South African, double defending Olympic 800m champion and also a two-time world gold medallist in the distance, was one of a number of women taking medication to lower her testosterone level until 2015 when the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) suspended an IAAF rule that enforced a limit on naturally occurring levels.

But she has studiously avoided the controversy, instead concentrating on her track performances.

Semenya will be up against it, however, with world record holder Dibaba, Olympic champion Faith Kipyegon of Kenya and the Netherlands' world indoor champion Sifan Hassan, who took bronze two years ago in Beijing, all in top form as the top trio on the world list, all with sub-3:58 clockings.

Kipyegon and Hassan have won two Diamond League meetings each this season – the former in Shanghai and Eugene and the latter in Rome and Paris – while Dibaba, who may not be in 3:50.07 world record form of two years ago, has clocked 3:57.82 en route to her 4:16.05 mile victory at the Diamond League meet in Lausanne last month.

Hassan (4:08.89) won the second heat ahead of American Jennifer Simpson, while Kipyegon claimed victory in the third and final heat in 4:03.09.

Whatever the result, hopes will be high that Monday's 1500 final will not be tainted as the Olympic final in the same stadium at the 2012 London Games.

In that race, six of the top nine athletes have been disqualified for doping violations.

Such was the fallout, the International Olympic Committee has yet to publicly confirm any medal re-allocation, with just Bahrain's Maryam Yusuf Jamal listed in bronze medal position.



Ethiopia's Genzebe Dibaba (second from right) and South Africa's Caster Semenya (right) in action during the qualifying round of the women's 1500m event at the 2017 IAAF World Championships in London yesterday. (AFP)

## SPOTLIGHT

## Schippers eager to turn tables on Thompson

AFP  
London

Dafne Schippers will get only one bite at avenging defeat in the two Olympic sprint finals last year to her bitter rival Elaine Thompson at the world athletics championships starting today.

The statuesque Dutch runner will not have Thompson breathing down her neck when she defends her 200m world crown, the Jamaican having opted to focus solely on the 100m until the 2020 Olympics.

But nothing would give Schippers greater pleasure than to defeat the 25-year-old Jamaican in Sunday's final – provided of course they both make it through Saturday's heats and the semi-finals.

Schippers, who was a top class heptathlete winning world bronze in 2013 but then switched to sprinting, saw too much of Thompson's back in Rio finishing fifth in the 100m and runner-up in the 200m whilst a nightmare Games ended when she messed up a baton exchange in the 4x100m relay.

However, Schippers – who has had a bridge named in her honour in her home town of Utrecht – is hopeful that she can make the championships in London a far happier experience given her frosty relationship with Thompson.

"It's very bad," Schippers confessed to the *Daily Mail* in July. "I don't know why. Maybe because we are both big talents."

"If she says 'Hi' I will say 'Hi'. I am more of an easy person. With the European athletes, I can have fun with them. I am an easy person to talk to. If she won't do that, then OK," added the 25-year-old.

Schippers, who took time adjust to the attention after landing double European gold in 2014, compares the lack of empathy with Thompson to her friendly relationship with now retired British heptathlon legend Jessica



Ennis-Hill.

"When I did heptathlon, it was friendlier," she said. "I spent a week in Sheffield with Jess Ennis when I was 18. Jess was a hero for me."

## 'MOOD NOT GREAT'

Schippers nevertheless has huge respect for Thompson as an athlete and her dominance last year has prompted the Dutch sprinter to change both her training and coach.

"Now I train with a real sprint coach and I try to work on the start more than I ever did and try to make progress and try to be a real sprinter because before I used to train with a heptathlon coach," she told the Jamaica Gleaner in June.

"I think it is always cool (the rivalry); because she (Thompson) is fast and I am fast and it is nice competing with each other and I love that."

Thompson – who endured a troubled childhood and was brought up by her grandmother – left her Dutch rival in her wake despite running in trainers at the London Diamond League meet in July.

However, Schippers is determined to show that Rio was a blip and she can turn things round.

"My mood was not great after Rio. I came for Gold and didn't get it. There is always the next Gold. Starting in London!"

## GOLF

## IOC defends stance on Russian doping

AFP  
London

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) yesterday defended its stance on Russia despite being criticised for balking at calls to ban the country outright from last year's Rio Olympics over doping.

Russia was accused in a World Anti-Doping Agency report last year of widespread state-sponsored doping. Its athletics team was barred by the IAAF from the Rio Games and will also miss the IAAF World Championships that get under way later yesterday.

But there was no blanket ban for Russia in Rio, the IOC coming under fire for instead allowing individual sports federations to decide which Russian athletes could compete.

IOC president Thomas Bach insisted that the IAAF was a special case, outlining the "collusive co-operation" Russian elements had enjoyed with the disgraced former IAAF president Lamine Diack and other corrupt people at the heart of track and field.

Russia "was discussed, it was raised", Bach told a press conference in London alongside current IAAF president Sebastian Coe, who initiated the ban on Russia and resultant reforms within global track and field's governing body.

"It was very clear that, as we have always said, different issues need different approaches," the German said.

"The IAAF is in fact the only international federation, international sports organisation, which is, due to facts relating to the former leadership of the IAAF, implicated in the report of Professor McLaren as is the national federation of athletics of Russia," he said in reference to the Canadian co-author of the bombshell report into the state-sponsored doping.



IOC president Thomas Bach.

"This is the difference to all other international federations.

"Professor McLaren made it always very clear that there is no other, neither national federation nor international federation, about which he would have similar information of such a collusive cooperation with regard to the fight against doping."

"In this respect, the IAAF was in a special situation and addressed it then with special measures."

Bach added: "It was a courageous decision at the time and it is a courageous decision to follow it through."

"The IOC accepted and supported these measures from the very beginning."

**ACKNOWLEDGE THE TURBULENCE**  
IAAF head Coe said he had informed Bach of Russia's "important step" Thursday when Dmitry Shlyakhtin, head of the Russian athletics federa-

tion (RusAF), publicly apologised for the doping scandal.

"I expressed my comfort for the new head of RusAF was prepared to acknowledge the turbulence that they had had to deal with it and the way in which they were gripping that return," the Briton said.

"An international federation can only respond to the circumstances that it confronts. You can't benchmark your responses against what other federations may be doing because you're not comparing like for like."

"This was the roadmap we thought was the best roadmap for normalising the situation," he said of the Rune Andersen-headed Taskforce set up by IAAF to oversee the return of Russia to international competition.

"There are still some milemarks to meet but we are making progress."

"The object is to make sure that when those (Russian) athletes do return to international competition... under normal circumstances, representative of their nation, then they do so in a way that's not remotely jeopardising the ambitions of clean athletes wherever they happen to be."

A number of Russian athletes, however, have been granted permission by the IAAF to compete as neutrals after meeting the exceptional eligibility criteria, essentially demonstrating that they've come through transparent anti-doping testing.

Coe has confirmed that 19 Russian athletes were in London to compete at the worlds.

But the country remains excluded as a whole after the Congress of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) voted in favour of the Council's decision to maintain the ban on RusAF.

Taskforce chief Andersen insists that the timeline of a Russian return to international action in November was still possible.

### Doping charge against Jamaica's Hylton thrown out

Jamaica's 4x400m world championship bronze medalist Riker Hylton has been cleared of an alleged doping violation by an independent anti-doping panel in Kingston. The Jamaican Anti-Doping Commission (JADCO) claimed the 28-year-old, part of the team that came third at the 2011 World Championships in Daegu, had failed or evaded to submit a sample requested by a collection officer in April 2016.

After a three-day hearing, the three-member panel ruled that JADCO had "not discharged its burden proving that Riker Hylton committed a doping violation under article 2.3 of the JADCO rules, 2015 to the comfortable satisfaction of the panel."

Hylton's representative Emir Crowne said he and his client were "grateful for the ruling". "As you can imagine these proceedings weighed quite heavily on the athlete and he's relieved to have this matter put to rest, especially as the eyes of the world will be on Jamaica and Jamaican athletes for the current IAAF World Championships," he said. "At the end of the day the panel was not comfortably satisfied that Mr Hylton was in fact notified (by JADCO)," he added. This is the second high-profile ruling to go against JADCO in recent times.

In June, Commonwealth 400m hurdles champion Kaliese Spencer was also cleared by the Independent Anti-doping Disciplinary Panel of charges she had refused to provide a sample for testing. That panel ruled it was "not persuaded by the standard of evidence provided" by JADCO.

## HORSE RACING / QATAR GOODWOOD FESTIVAL

# Al Jazi completes hat-trick of wins for Al Shaqab at Goodwood

Filly wins L'Ormarins Queens Plate Oak Tree Stakes for second straight year

By Sports Reporter  
Chichester, United Kingdom

For the second year in succession, Al Shaqab Racing's Al Jazi won the Group Three seven-furlong L'Ormarins Queens Plate Oak Tree Stakes at Qatar Goodwood Festival yesterday.

Trained in France by Francois Rohaut, she was sent off the favourite.

Following 11 months off the track, Eternally, partnered by James Doyle, made a good impression coming second on her return to the racecourse. She finished a length and a quarter behind Al Jazi, ridden by Frankie Dettori.

The winner blanket on Al Jazi displayed the 'Tamim al Majid' image and even Dettori put on the image enthusiastically, after he performed a flying dismount to celebrate his first win of the week.

Dettori has had a torrid time with a shoulder injury and a stop start return to riding. But his season after victory at the weekend in the King George VI & Queen Elizabeth Stakes at Ascot on Enable followed by this success, has hit full stride.

"I would like to dedicate this race to His Excellency Sheikh Joaan (bin Hamad al-Thani)," the Italian said after the race. "Al Jazi won easy, travelled well, quickened and is uncomplicated. She has got a stride on her and for Goodwood that is ideal.

"She has a good cruising speed and a good kick. She put the race to bed straightaway. Friday and I have finally got on the score sheet. Qatar have sponsored the meeting and it is nice to get a winner on the board for my boss - I am happy now.

"It has been six weeks since my shoulder injury and I have been working hard at it. It is back to where it was now."

Harry Herbert, racing manager for Al Shaqab, said, "She's a specialist at this trip and at this racecourse, coming back to win this for the second year running."

"For Francois Rohaut this is his treble up for Al Shaqab; he also won with Amy Eria three years ago. So it's very special and good to get a win on the board.

"This is a really important week for us, and, apart from the weather, it has just gone so well. The atmosphere on this racecourse is so incredible.

"For Al Shaqab, of course, it is hugely important, and for Qatar, to have this win. Al Jazi was our best chance of the week and thankfully she's gone and done it.

Looking ahead, the four-year-old Canford Cliffs' filly, who previously ran in the Group One six-furlong Diamond Jubilee Stakes at Royal Ascot, will probably return to top level company.

"I have not yet spoken with Francois about plans," said Herbert. "But I'd imagine she'd go for the Foret, or something really good like that. When they are specialist over seven furlongs, there are not a huge number of options, and you get tempted like at Royal Ascot to go back in



Al Shaqab Racing's executive director Khalifa bin Mohamed al-Attiyah (third from right), racing manager Harry Herbert (second from right), and Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club (QREC) general manager Nasser Sherida al-Kaabi (right) lead in Al Jazi, who was ridden to victory in the L'Ormarins Queens Plate Oak Tree Stakes by Frankie Dettori (second from left), at Qatar Goodwood Festival yesterday. PICTURES: Juhaim



Jockey Frankie Dettori wears a 'Tamim al Majid' logo after riding Al Jazi to victory in the L'Ormarins Queens Plate Oak Tree Stakes at Qatar Goodwood Festival.

trip for the Diamond Jubilee.

"She actually ran very well at Ascot, but a race over six is over before it has begun for her; she does all her best work at the end."



## Long-awaited win this year: Khalifa al-Attiyah

Al Shaqab Racing executive director Khalifa bin Mohamed al-Attiyah was elated after Al Jazi won the Group Three seven-furlong L'Ormarins Queens Plate Oak Tree Stakes. The win meant that Al Shaqab Rac-

ing had won the race for the third straight year with Amy Eria winning the 2015 edition. "That was a long-awaited win in this edition of the Festival," al-Attiyah said yesterday. "But what is good and joyful

about it is that it is Al Shaqab's third win of this title in a row. We've won several titles twice, but this is our first hat-trick ever. And we'll be back for the fourth title at Goodwood in 2018. "Al Jazi's performance was wonderful.

Francois Rohaut won the same title with her last year. We look forward to more wins tomorrow with three runners, Shraaoh, Medahim and Mazzyoun, for Al Shaqab, especially as the races bear the name of Qatar."

## Battaash wins Qatar King George Stakes

Battaash took himself into the leading ranks of sprinters with a convincing two and a quarter length success in the Group Two five-furlong Qatar King George Stakes yesterday.

Sent off a chance, he is trained by Charlie Hills and was ridden by Jim Crowley. "I was delighted with his performance today. It is drying ground but he seemed to handle it no problem at all. I was really impressed with him," Hills said. Mubarak Ajan al-Kuwari, second secretary of the embassy of the State of Qatar in the United Kingdom, presented the trophies.

Al-Kuwari stressed the Festival's importance in strengthening the Qatari-English relations.

"We have seen the great success of the Festival in the three editions that have been held so far with Qatar's support. The Festival is also an opportunity for Qatari companies to participate whether directly or indirectly each in their own area



Mubarak Ajan al-Kuwari, second secretary, embassy of Qatar in the United Kingdom.

of business. The Qatari embassy in the United Kingdom plays a supporting role in promoting this Festival and inviting UK politicians, parliamentarians and ministers to attend the Festival, contributing to the promotion of the event in the diplomatic circles and so enhancing the recognition of the standing of Qatar worldwide," al-Kuwari said.



Jim Crowley rides Battaash to victory in the Qatar King George Stakes (Gr 2) yesterday.

## ATHLETICS

# Team Qatar's Olympic, world medallists head to London

By Sports Reporter  
London

Olympic silver and bronze medallist, Mutaz Barshim, double World Junior Champion, Ashraf Elseify and rising star in the 400m hurdles, Abderrahman Samba, are part of an incredibly strong Qatari team that will be competing at the London 2017 IAAF World Championships, which started yesterday.

The world's third largest sporting event kicked off yesterday at London Stadium, home to the London 2012 Olympic Games. As many as 2000 athletes from 200 nations will compete over 10 days to be crowned as some of the greatest athletes in the world, with five talented Qatar athletes hoping to make their nation proud.

Speaking about Team Qatar, Qatar Athletics Federation (QAF) president and Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) secretary general Dr Thani Abdulrahman al-Kuwari said, "We are incredibly proud of all our athletes that have qualified to compete at the London IAAF World Championships, demonstrating years of hard work, dedication and commitment. They are fantastic role models for our young people and we hope that our whole nation will get behind them and show their support as they go head to head with the world's greatest athletes.

"The strength and depth of the Qatari team competing in London re-



High jumper Mutaz Barshim (right) with 400m hurdler Abderrahman Samba.

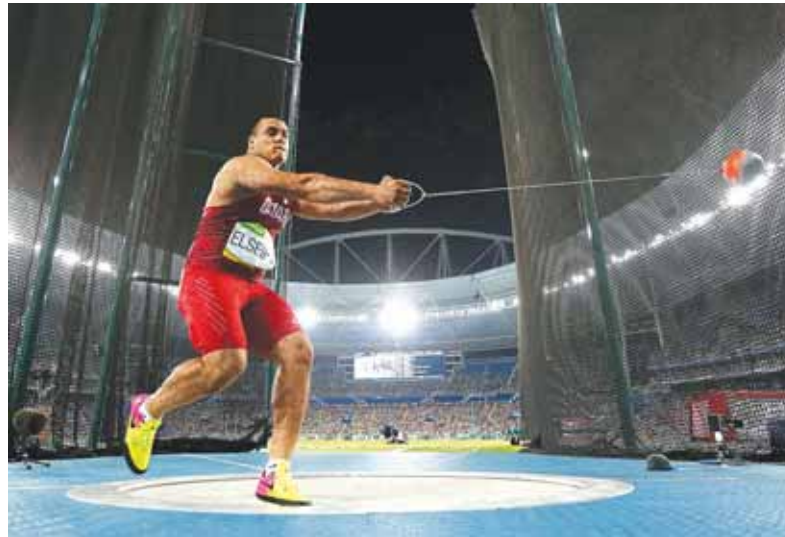
flects the considerable progress that Qatar has made in athletics development over the years.

With Doha hosting the next edition of the World Championships in 2019, we hope that athletics will continue to grow and flourish across the whole of the Middle East as we bring the event to our region for the first time in history. We will work hard over the next two years to maximise this unique opportunity to introduce athletics to new audiences, inspire new athletes and capture the attention of new fans."

Heading Team Qatar will be the na-

tion's greatest-ever athlete Barshim, who will be bidding to make further sporting history and become Qatar's first-ever IAAF world champion. The current world number one has shown incredible form throughout 2017 and has been unbeaten so far this season. Barshim also has his eyes on Javier Sotomayor's 24-year-old world record after recording the second highest jump in history in 2014.

Speaking earlier this year, Barshim said, "Whenever there is a big, major championship, the only thing I am looking for is the gold, and that is what we are chasing this year. If I stay injury



Qatar's Ashraf Elseify finishes sixth in Rio 2016 hammer throw final.

free, I think I would have a very good shot at the world record. I had two close jumps in two seasons. I hope this will be the season."

Attempting to win his first major senior medal will be hammer thrower Elseify, who won the World Junior Championships in 2012 and 2014, and holds the junior world record. Still only 22, Elseify finished an incredible sixth in last year's Rio 2016 Olympic Games in a field of much older and more experienced athletes.

Joining Elseify in the field events is fellow Aspire Academy graduate, 21-year-old Ahmed Bader, who was the

youngest competitor in last year's Olympic javelin throw final and recently won silver at the 2017 Asian Athletics Championships.

"My goal for London is to reach the final. Once I get there, anything is possible. My biggest competition will definitely be the German team - they have many talented javelin throwers," Bader said.

Completing Qatar's line-up will be talented young sprinters, 22-year-old Samba and 20-year-old Abdalleh Haroun, who will compete in the 400m hurdles and 400m respectively. Samba, who only took up the 400m hurdles at



Ahmed Bader won silver at 2017 Asian Athletics Championships.

the beginning of this year, made an immediate mark on the event when he ran the fastest time in the world in March and then went on to storm to victory in May's Doha Diamond League, ahead of reigning Olympic Champion, Kerron Clement.

Meanwhile, Haroun has achieved incredible results at a very young age with silver in 2016's World Indoor Championships, gold in the 2016 World U20 Championships and gold in the 2015 Asian Athletics Championships.

Haroun will kick off the action for Team Qatar when he competes in the first round of the 400m today morning.