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NHL | Page 6

**Capitals down
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RUGBY | Page 7

**Vermeulen
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Wednesday, June 6, 2018
Ramadan 21, 1439 AH

GULF TIMES SPORT



FOOTBALL

**Concussion
may have caused
Karius woes in final**

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TENNIS/FRENCH OPEN

Cecchinato stuns Djokovic in epic match to reach semis

In a tense encounter, both men were slapped with code violations for coaching before Cecchinato saved three set points

AFP
Paris

World number 72 Marco Cecchinato became the first Italian man in 40 years to reach a Grand Slam semi-final yesterday with a breathtaking 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 1-6, 7-6 (13/11) victory over 12-time major winner Novak Djokovic.

Cecchinato, who had never won a Grand Slam match in his career before Roland Garros, goes on to face Austrian seventh seed Dominic Thiem for a place in Sunday's final.

In an epic fourth set tiebreaker, Djokovic saved three match points but wasted three set points as Cecchinato became the lowest-ranked man in the semi-finals in Paris since 100th-ranked Andrei Medvedev in 1999.

In a roller-coaster of a quarter-final, both men were warned for coaching, 2016 champion Djokovic required two medical timeouts while the Italian was docked a point for unsportsmanlike behaviour.

Djokovic had also squandered three set points in the second set and failed to serve out the fourth in the ninth game after being 5-2 in front.

In an extraordinary post-match press conference, Djokovic then said he may even skip Wimbledon where he has been champion three times.

"I don't know if I am going to play on grass," said the Serb.

Cecchinato said he was stunned by



Italy's Marco Cecchinato celebrates winning his quarter-final match against Serbia's Novak Djokovic in the French Open yesterday. At right, Djokovic shows his frustration.

his triumph, coming just two years after his career was almost derailed when he became embroiled in match fixing allegations.

"Maybe I'm sleeping. It's amazing, it's unbelievable for me. I'm very happy because it's unbelievable to beat Novak Djokovic in a quarter-final at Roland Garros. It's amazing," said the 25-year-old who is the first Italian to get this far at a Slam since Corrado Barazzutti at Roland Garros in 1978.

"I was two breaks down on the tie-

breaker and I had two or three match points and then on the fourth one I was very tired."

Djokovic saluted Cecchinato who he warmly embraced at the net.

"He played amazing, so congratulations for a great performance," he said.

"I struggled at the beginning and also had a little injury at the beginning. After then I warmed up and it was better, but yeah, just a pity that I couldn't capitalise on some break points at 4-1 in the fourth set."

Djokovic, bidding to reach a 32nd Grand Slam semi-final, hit just three winners in the first set.

The 31-year-old also needed a medical timeout to treat a neck injury which looked as if it would derail him when he slipped 0-2 down in the second set to the Italian outsider.

However, Djokovic levelled at 2-2 and then survived two break points – and a 30-stroke rally – in the seventh game.

In a tense encounter, both men

were slapped with code violations for coaching before Cecchinato gallantly saved three set points.

He made Djokovic pay for that failure to convert when he reeled off four successive points in the ensuing tie-breaker.

In a topsy-turvy afternoon on Court Suzanne Lenglen, Djokovic raced through the third set in just 27 minutes before requiring further medical attention, this time for a right leg injury.

While that was happening, Cecchinato was docked a penalty point for unsportsmanlike conduct after a lengthy argument with the umpire and supervisor for leaving the court without permission.

Djokovic sprinted out to 5-2 but was reeled back in to 5-5, having squandered three points for a double break in the sixth game.

In a nail-biting tiebreaker, Djokovic saved the first match point with a no-look backhand volley before throwing away his third set point with a ballooned forehand with the court at his mercy.

Thiem reached his third successive French Open semi-final with a 6-4, 6-2, 6-1 demolition of a hobbled and exhausted Alexander Zverev who admitted he was close to quitting the tie.

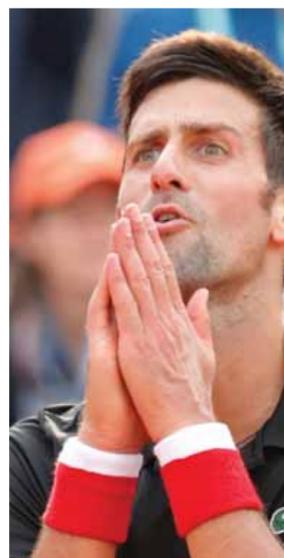
German second seed Zverev simply ran out of gas, paying a heavy price for needing three successive five-set matches to reach his first Grand Slam quarter-final.

His Roland Garros marathon also left him physically drained – he needed his left thigh strapped in the second set.

Meanwhile, US Open champion Sloane Stephens brushed aside Russian Daria Kasatkina in the French Open quarter-finals to set up a repeat of last year's Flushing Meadows final with fellow American and good friend Madison Keys.

The 10th seed produced a clinical performance to down Kasatkina, the conqueror of world number two Caroline Wozniacki, 6-3, 6-1 on Court Philippe Chatrier.

Earlier in the day Keys, the 13th seed, reached the semi-finals for the first time by seeing off Kazakhstan's Yulia



Putintseva 7-6 (7/5), 6-4.

"I'm excited to play my good friend in the semi-finals, we've already played in the US Open final and it's really good for American tennis," said Stephens.

The 25-year-old, who was ranked 957 just six weeks before her maiden Grand Slam triumph last year after a series of injury problems, is now into the semi-finals of a major for the third time.

The two players traded breaks early in the match, before Stephens produced some ferocious hitting at the end of a marathon eighth game to give herself the chance to serve for the opening set.

She did just that, with the help of a sumptuous backhand drop shot.

The 14th-seeded Kasatkina kicked off the second set with a solid hold of serve, but Stephens broke in the third game with a venomous cross-court forehand and eased to victory after just an hour and 10 minutes of play.

ATHLETICS

All eyes on Samba-Warholm clash in Oslo

IAAF
Oslo

Of all the clashes to savour at the Bislett Games tomorrow night in Oslo, one stands clear above the rest – a race that will draw a rapturous reception from the Oslo crowd at what will be the fifth meeting of this year's IAAF Diamond League.

One lap, 10 barriers, two 22-year-old athletes in the form of their life, a hero and anti-hero for the locals to root for/against – the men's 400m hurdles will have everything you could wish for in a race, all passing in one brilliant, 47-second blur.

The favourite, at least on paper, is Qatar's Abderrahman Samba, who has screamed out of the blocks so far this year and has cracked 48 seconds on each of his three outings at the distance. The most recent of those came in Rome last week, where Samba came from behind to win in an Asian record of 47.48.

On any other day, in any other place,



arriving with that kind of form would make him a virtual shoo-in for victory, but not here, with world champion Karsten Warholm in the line-up, an athlete who will prove particularly hard to slay on home turf.

We know Warholm likes it in the Bislett Stadium, having announced his outrageous talent here last year when he set a national record of 48.25.

Last week in Rome, Warholm ripped through the first 300 metres at a freakish pace, but conceded the lead to Samba late on, still charging to the finish in 47.82 to smash the Norwegian record. Yasmani Copello of Turkey and Kerron Clement, the reigning Olympic champion, are also in the line-up, though few eyes will be trained anywhere but the big two: Warholm and Samba. With warm, sunny conditions forecast, a swift time is sure to be on the cards.

Elsewhere, there is the usual embarrassment of riches you'd expect from a meeting with such history and prestige, which this year gathers 20 world champions and eight Olympic gold medalists.

In the men's high jump, the clash between Mutaz Essa Barshim and Danil Lysenko will ensure no eyes are drooping as night arrives in the land of the midnight sun. They served up a riveting duel at the IAAF World Indoor Championships back in March, where Lysenko claimed gold, but Barshim took some revenge at the Eugene Diamond League last month, the Qatari going over 2.36m to beat Lysenko's best of 2.32m.

Barshim is the 2017 Male Athlete of the Year and cleared 2.40m in Doha last month, but will likely have his hands full against Lysenko, who cleared 2.37m indoors and will have blown away the cobwebs in his outdoor debut in Eugene. Another worthy of respect is Belarus's Dzmitry Nabokau, who cleared a national record of 2.36m last month.

This being Oslo – home of the Dream Mile, capital of the country that produced the Ingebrigtsens – the concluding event of the night should prove a fitting climax.

This year's Dream Mile will be headlined by world 1500m champion Elijah Manangoi of Kenya, though the cheers

of the crowd will be firmly behind the Ingebrigtsen brothers, Filip and Henrik. Britain's Jake Wightman is another with form in this arena, having won the 1500m here last year in 3:34.17, and he should make a bold bid having chased Manangoi home in the 1500m at the Commonwealth Games in April, where he finished third.

Though not a Diamond League event, many will look forward to the men's 1500m earlier in the programme, where Jakob Ingebrigtsen, fresh from his breakthrough 3:52.28 mile in Eugene, will take on an international field that includes Britain's Chris O'Hare and US athlete Robby Andrews.

The women's 3000m steeplechase should prove an intriguing contest, pitting US athletes Emma Coburn and Courtney Frerichs – who went 1-2 at last year's IAAF World Championships – against home heroine Karoline Bjerkeli Grovdal, who has a best of 9:13.35. However, the favourite may well be Kenya's Hyvin Kiyeng, who made the best of Coburn's late-race fall to sprint to victory in Rome last week in 9:04.96, a world lead.

WORLD CUP

'England must believe Russia will be different'

Captain Kane hopeful that inexperience will also mean Southgate's squad will also be less fearful

AFP
Burton-on-Trent, United Kingdom

Harry Kane has urged his England teammates to put the negativity that has blighted previous campaigns behind them as a new-look squad look to make an impact at the World Cup in Russia. Kane will captain a youthful group with only Chelsea defender Gary Cahill having won more than 50 caps.

England haven't won a major tournament since the 1966 World Cup and Tottenham striker Kane is hopeful that inexperience will also mean Gareth Southgate's squad will also be less fearful. "The main thing is to believe it can be different," he said at England's media day yesterday.

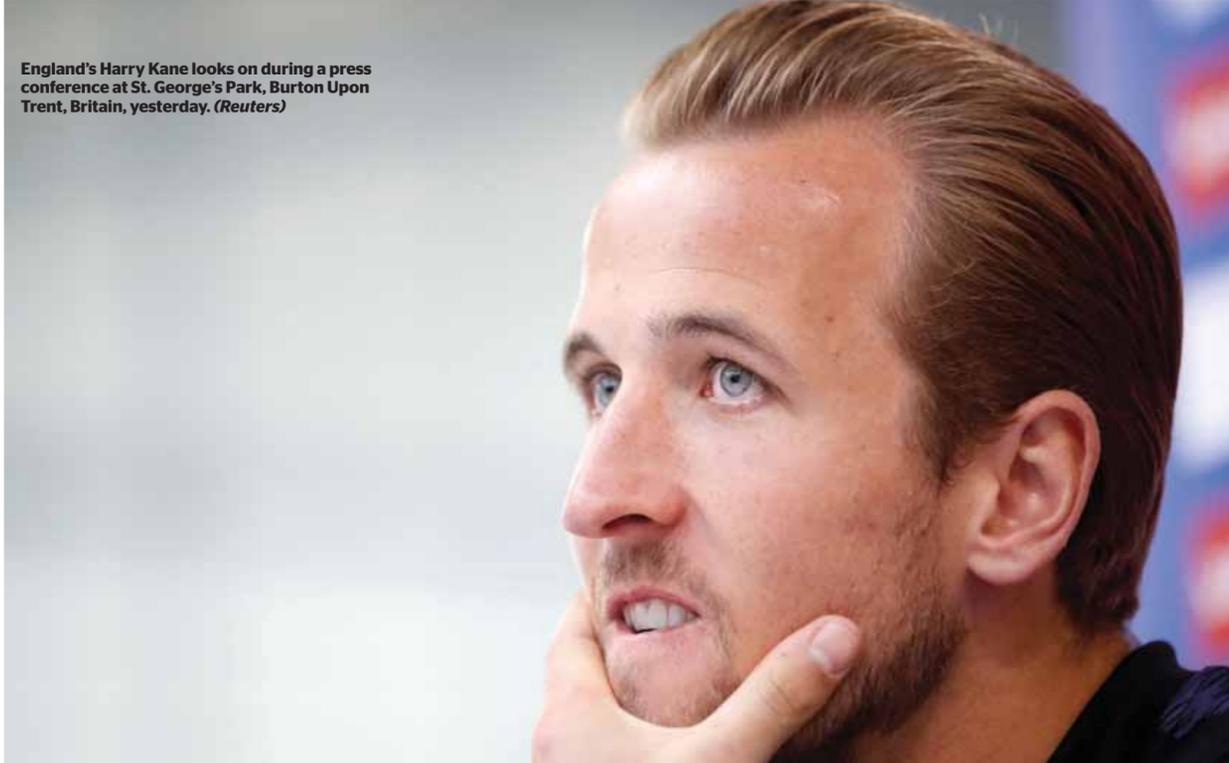
"It's been tough because for the last 50 years we haven't won anything. We've got to stay focused on ourselves and not worry about the teams in the past. We're our own team and our own identity. We've got to enjoy the occasion and we can't wait to get out there and get started."

Kane will not only carry the burden of leadership, but will also be expected to score the goals to carry England deep into the tournament after a best ever return of 41 this season, despite suffering an ankle ligament injury in March.

The 24-year-old took a few weeks to refine his best form on his return from a three-week layoff. But after ending the club season with five goals in six games, he also netted his 13th international goal as England beat Nigeria 2-1 at Wembley on Saturday.

"I feel really good and training has been of a high intensity," he added. "It's been a tough camp and that's what we all needed. It was good to get some minutes on the weekend and I'm fully refreshed."

Kane had been listed by FIFA as the



England's Harry Kane looks on during a press conference at St. George's Park, Burton Upon Trent, Britain, yesterday. (Reuters)

joint heaviest player in the tournament when all 32 nations' squad lists were released on Monday. But he insisted he is a good six kilos lighter than the 96 kilo (15 stone) weight listed by world football's governing body.

"I don't know if it's been changed but I'm definitely not 15-and-a-half-

stone," he added. "I'm normally about 89 or 90 kilos. We weigh most days when we get up and that's normally my fighting weight."

So far the only negative publicity surrounding England's preparations was the criticism Raheem Sterling received for having a gun tattoo on his leg. Ster-

ling said the "unfinished" tattoo references the shooting of his father who was gunned down in Jamaica when the Manchester City winger was just two years of age.

However, Sterling insisted he hasn't been distracted by the coverage surrounding him in the past week. "It's not

really been that tough," said Sterling.

"I just got on with my day. I spoke with my mum and she was OK. My daughter and my son are OK, I'm fine. That was the least of my worries. It's obviously bad to see yourself spoken of in that light, but it's not something that gets me down."

Turkey hold Russia in warm-up match

Moscow: Russia extended their winless streak to seven matches with a 1-1 home draw against Turkey yesterday in their last warm-up game just nine days before the World Cup kick-off.

Midfielder Yunus Malli came off the bench at half-time to cancel out Alexander Samedov's 35th minute opener and deny Russia a first win in eight months.

Turkey, who are rebuilding after failing to make it into the World Cup finals in Russia, started in a lively fashion seeking an early opener but failed to create any serious threat in the opening quarter-hour. Russia, spurred by the capacity 30,000 crowd at VTB Arena, CSKA Moscow's home ground, soon took over the initiative pinning the visitors back but Turkey defended stoutly stifling the hosts' attacks into poorly targeted crosses.

The hosts broke the deadlock in the 35th minute when they intercepted the ball just outside the visitors area and CSKA playmaker Alan Dzagoev found Samedov in the area and he kept his cool to send the ball into the net with an angled close-range shot.

After the break Mircea Lucescu's side poured forwards in attack in search of an equaliser and Malli pulled the scores level beating Russian keeper Igor Akinfeev with a low shot from 25 yards out just before the hour mark.

Krasnodar forward Fyodor Smolov, Russia's top scorer in 2016-17 and second this year, missed a chance to restore the hosts lead in the 72nd minute when he sent the ball just inches wide of the right post with a 12-yard shot. Russia now have five wins, six draws and 10 defeats since Stanislav Cherchesov took over in August 2016.

Russia kick off their World Cup campaign against Saudi Arabia at Luzhniki Stadium.

SPOTLIGHT

Rojo wants World Cup reversal of fortune

AFP
London

Marcos Rojo wants to feel like what it is to win a World Cup rather than the agony he experienced for Argentina when they lost to Germany 1-0 after extra-time in 2014, he said yesterday. The 28-year-old Manchester United defender, who has over 50 caps to his name, said hopefully Argentina would perform better than they did in sneaking through in qualifying.

Rojo - who signed a new contract with United in March this year which will keep him at the club till 2021 - will face Nigeria in the group stage, a side he scored his first international goal against in the 2014 finals.

"Obviously, it's a really important thing and a big deal for any Argentinian to wear that shirt," he said.

"We really feel the shirt a lot and we defend our colours. We give everything when we are wearing it and we want payback for the way things happened at the last World Cup. We will do everything to give our fans the possibility to celebrate winning the trophy again."

Rojo, who joined United in 2014 for £16mn from Portuguese side Sporting Lisbon, said much would depend on their superstar Lionel Messi. Messi has won everything at club level with Barcelona but is still without a Copa America or World Cup winners medal having finished on the losing side in three Copa finals and in the 2014 World Cup final. "I think it's three or four times now we've been drawn with Nigeria and it will be a dif-



Argentina's (from left) Lionel Messi, Sergio Aguero, Marcos Rojo, Nicolas Otamendi and Angel Di Maria train in Barcelona yesterday. (Reuters)

icult group," said Rojo. "Croatia and Iceland are in there too. Hopefully, Lionel Messi will be in form and can do something for us."

The two-time World Cup winners play

their final pre-World Cup match against Israel this Saturday with their campaign kicking-off against Euro 2016 quarter-finalists Iceland on Saturday June 16.

FOCUS

'No chance' for Glik to make World Cup: Poland's football chief

AFP
Warsaw, Poland

Poland's Monaco defender Kamil Glik has "no chance" of competing in the World Cup after seriously injuring his shoulder, according to Polish Football Federation (PZPN) officials ahead of a final decision due tomorrow.

"There's no chance. Kamil Glik hurt himself. He won't be going to the World Cup," PZPN president Zbigniew Boniek tweeted yesterday in Italian, which he picked up years ago playing for Juventus and AS Roma. Polish team doctor Jacek Jaroszewski added: "An injury like this needs long-term treatment (or) almost certain surgical intervention."

Glik suffered an injury to the acromioclavicular joint ligament in his shoulder, according to an official statement.

"Even if the intervention doesn't happen, Kamil will be out for at least six weeks," Jaroszewski said, adding that Monaco decided to have Glik undergo in-depth examination in Nice. "A definitive diagnosis will be issued on Thursday, which is why we are refraining from making our final



decision for now," he added.

If his injury is serious, Glik will be replaced by Stuttgart's Marcin Kaminski, Poland head coach Adam Nawalka said on Monday. "If Kamil isn't able to play at the World Cup, it'll be a great loss," Poland captain Robert Lewandowski told Polish media, remaining optimistic however that someone would step in to fill the void.

"He's the backbone of our defence. He's a key figure in key parts of the game," said Bayern Munich striker Lewandowski, who was also the Bundesliga's top scorer this season. "On the other

hand, we can't think that we won't manage," he said, stressing: "We have to think positively and be positive that someone else will jump into the lineup."

Glik got injured in training on Monday, shortly after coach Nawalka had submitted his squad list to FIFA. World Cup rules allow the final squad to be named 24 hours before the first game starts. Poland play Senegal in Group H on June 19 before facing Colombia and Japan.

Before that, they play friendly warm-up matches against Chile on Friday and Lithuania next Tuesday.

FRIENDLY

Lukewarm Serbia stumble at home to Chile, Morocco impress

Reuters
Zurich

Lukewarm Serbia stumbled to a 1-0 home defeat by Chile in a World Cup warm-up on Monday night while Morocco were far more impressive in a 2-1 win over Slovakia in the other match involving a finalist.

Meanwhile, Italy and the Netherlands, two of the biggest names to miss out on Russia, continued their rebuilding work with a 1-1 draw in Turin. Serbia, who face Brazil, Costa Rica and Switzerland in their group, looked vulnerable every time the South American

champions - who surprisingly failed to qualify for the World Cup - came forward.

Guillermo Maripan headed in an 89th-winner for Chile, a fair reward for their more adventurous display. Morocco, who face Iran, Portugal and Spain in World Cup Group B, produced plenty of slick passing against Slovakia as they extended their unbeaten run to 11 matches.

Although they fell behind to a long-range Jans Gregus effort in the 59th minute, Morocco replied with goals from Ayoub Kaabi and Younes Belhanda in a 10-minute spell. Poland's preparations suffered a blow when defender Kamil Glik seriously injured his shoul-

der in training on the same day as being named in their 23-man squad.

Coach Adam Nawalka said the 30-year-old, who fell awkwardly after attempting an overhead kick, would be replaced by VfB Stuttgart's Marcin Kaminski if he did not recover in time to travel to Russia.

Egypt gambled on Mohamed Salah returning to fitness by naming him in their final squad, while Mohamed El-neny, the midfielder who has not played since April after suffering an ankle injury in action for Arsenal, was also included.

Salah is still recovering from the shoulder ligament injury suffered in last month's Champions League final when

he went off early in the game in Kiev as Liverpool lost to Real Madrid. Egypt are hoping he will recover within three weeks, which could leave him fit to play in their final group match against Saudi Arabia on June 25.

Egypt's squad also includes veteran goalkeeper Essam El Hadary, who will be 45-years-old when his side play Uruguay. Should he feature, El Hadary would become the oldest player to feature in the World Cup.

Belgium coach Roberto Martinez gave Vincent Kompany two weeks to recover from a groin injury in time for the tournament, retaining the Manchester City captain in his squad but putting Laurent Ciman on standby.



Serbia's Aleksandar Mitrovic (centre) vies for the ball with Chile's captain Enzo Roco (right) and Guillermo Maripan during the friendly match in Graz, Austria. (AFP)

SPOTLIGHT

Concussion may have led to Karius' woes in Champions League

The Liverpool goalkeeper made two major errors that contributed to Real's victory

By Andy Hunter
The Guardian

Loris Karius's calamitous performance in the Champions League final could have been a result of concussion he sustained against Real Madrid, a doctor who assessed the Liverpool goalkeeper in Boston has said.

Liverpool sent Karius for a head scan at Massachusetts General Hospital last Thursday amid concern at his reaction to a collision with Real's captain, Sergio Ramos. The 24-year-old made two major errors that contributed to Real's 3-1 victory. The first presented Karim Benzema with the opening goal and came soon after he received a blow to the head from Ramos as they challenged at the near post. Later Karius allowed Gareth Bale to put the contest beyond Liverpool with a long-range shot that squirmed through his hands.

The German flew to the US on holiday after the final but Liverpool's medical department was sufficiently concerned about the impact of Ramos's challenge that it arranged a scan in Boston. Karius had a consultation with Dr Ross Zafonte, an authority on head-trauma injuries suffered by NFL players and the chief of physical medicine and rehabilitation at Massachusetts General.

A statement released on Monday by the hospital on Dr Zafonte's behalf and with the player's permission confirmed that Karius had been concussed. It read: "On May 31, 2018 Mr Karius underwent a comprehensive examination by Dr Ross Zafonte and Dr Lenore Herget in Boston at Massachusetts General Hospital and Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital. After carefully reviewing game film and integrating a detailed history - including his reported present and immediate post-



A distressed Loris Karius after Liverpool's loss to Real Madrid in the Champions League final.

contact subjective symptoms - physical examination and objective metrics, we have concluded that Mr Karius sustained a concussion during the match 26 May 2018. At the time of our evaluation Mr Karius's principal residual symptoms and objective signs suggested that visual spatial dysfunction existed and likely occurred immediately following the event. Additional symptomatic and objectively noted areas of dysfunction also persisted. It could be possible that such deficits

would affect performance. "We also note that Mr Karius has reported significant and steady improvement since the concussive event, and we expect him to make a full recovery based on the results of the examination. We expect that with treatment and by following prescribed activity protocols he will continue to improve. We have encouraged vigilance and an emphasis on safety in his eventual return to full activity?" Karius has continued his holiday in

California following the assessment in Boston and is due to return to pre-season training with Liverpool on 2 July.

The Anfield club have been fined €20,000 (£17,567) for disturbances at the Champions League quarter-final first leg in April, which included an attack on the Manchester City bus, Uefa announced on Monday. They were also fined €9,000 (£7,904) over the setting off of fireworks in the second leg with City and in the second leg of the semi-final at Roma.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Man United agree deal to sign Brazil midfielder Fred

AFP
London

Manchester United announced yesterday they have agreed a deal to sign Brazilian international midfielder Fred from Shakhtar Donetsk as Jose Mourinho seeks the magic formula to topple Premier League Champions Manchester City.

The 25-year-old will cost the English giants a reported fee of more than £50mn (\$67mn) and give Mourinho a powerful-looking midfielder, with the Brazilian set to slot in alongside Paul Pogba and Nemanja Matic.

United announced the deal in a brief statement on their official website, which read: "Manchester United is delighted to announce it has reached agreement with Shakhtar Donetsk for the transfer of Frederico Rodrigues de Paula Santos (Fred). A further announcement will be made in due course."

Fred becomes the first major summer signing by United boss Mourinho, who is also reportedly closing in on a deal for Porto defender Diogo Dalot. United finished second in the Premier League behind City but were a whopping 19 points behind their fierce rivals.

Despite their highest league finish since Alex Ferguson retired, Mourinho was heavily criticised for adopting cautious tactics in several big games as United were often made to look ponderous in comparison to stylish City's commitment to attack. And beating City to the signature of Fred, who was a target for the English champions in January, could prove to be a significant first step. Fred caught the eye in Shakhtar's run to the last-16 of the Champions League, where the Ukrainians only lost out on away goals to Roma.

A stunning free-kick in the first leg of that tie was a glimpse of what Fred's talented left foot can produce. However, he is far more of a creator than goalscorer as his record of just 15 goals in five years at Shakhtar suggests.

United are in need of midfield reinforcements with Michael Carrick retiring and Marouane Fellaini out of contract. Mourinho's task will now be to harness Fred's passing ability, while also finally getting the best out of Pogba in his third season since an £89mn move from Juventus.

Fred will hope to make the same impact on the Premier League as Brazilian international teammates Willian and Fernando, who also arrived in England via spells with Shakhtar. United fans are unlikely to get much of a glimpse of Fred at the World Cup in Russia, though, as he is yet to start an international under current coach Tite.

Handed his debut by Dunga in 2014, Fred's international career was disrupted after testing positive for the diuretic hydrochlorothiazide during the 2015 Copa America. He was banned from international football for a year by South America's governing body CONMEBOL, but only missed four months for Shakhtar as FIFA did not extend the ban to cover all confederations until February 2016.

Fred did not return to the national team until a 3-0 friendly win over Russia in March and Tite was keen for his transfer to be completed before the World Cup starts on June 14. "Players are always thinking of their careers. What you say is please resolve it as soon as possible so we can get them focused back on the task in hand with the national team," he said after Saturday's 2-0 win over Croatia at Anfield, in which Fred featured as a substitute. "If I was a club manager, I would be looking to sign him."

Real Madrid's Ramos hits back over Salah and Karius criticism



Sergio Ramos (left) said he was not responsible for Mohamed Salah's injury in the Champions League final in Kiev last month.

London: Sergio Ramos has dismissed suggestions that he was to blame for the challenge that hurt Egypt star Mohamed Salah in the Champions League final.

Salah left the field in tears after injuring his left shoulder in a tussle with Ramos with the score 0-0 in the first half of the final between Real Madrid and Liverpool in Kiev. Madrid went on to win the match 3-1 and their third straight European title, with Ramos also accused of deliberately elbowing Loris Karius - an incident that is believed to have caused the goalkeeper to suffer concussion. But the 32-year-old, who is preparing to play in his fourth World Cup finals with Spain, insisted that he has been unfairly castigated.

"I am only missing Roberto Firmino saying he got a cold because a drop of

my sweat landed on him," he said.

"Bloody hell, they have given this Salah thing a lot of attention. I didn't want to speak because everything is magnified. I remember the play well: he grabs my arm first and I fell to the other side, the injury happened to the other arm and they said that I gave him a judo hold. After that the goalkeeper said I dazed him with a clash.

Ramos added: "I spoke with Salah through messages, he was quite good. He could have played on if he got an injection for the second-half. I have done it sometimes but when Ramos does something like this, it sticks a little bit more. I don't know if it is because you are at Madrid for so long and win for so long that people look at it a different way."

The Guardian



Brazil's midfielder Fred takes part in a training in London. (AFP)

FOCUS

Real Madrid to get 50mn euros without kicking a ball

Reuters
Bern

European champions Real Madrid will get around 50mn euros (\$58mn) without kicking a ball in the Champions League next season as a new revenue distribution system comes into effect.

Real Madrid beat Liverpool 3-1 in the final in Kiev, Ukraine last month to take home their third straight European title. Since their French coach Zinedine Zidane resigned from the post, saying the team needs a new thinking.

European football body UEFA said yesterday that 2.04bn euros would be distributed among the teams competing in its flagship tournament in 2018/19, although some will get considerably more than others. Critics say that the system creates a snowball effect as the clubs who already have the highest revenue get the most money.

UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin, who was elected shortly after the new system was approved in 2016, has said that the lack of competitive balance is

the biggest issue facing European football, but he concedes it cannot be changed overnight.

Champions League group stage participants next year will receive a starting fee - which is the same for all teams - plus bonuses for winning matches, additional payments calculated on previous results (known as the coefficient ranking) and finally a share of the television market pool.

The payments based on the coefficient ranking - calculated using results over the last 10 seasons in European competition - are the newest and the most contentious as they will benefit the biggest clubs the most. UEFA said that 585.05mn euros had been set aside for this category and would be divided into shares of 1.108mn euros each.

Of the 32 teams in the group stage, the lowest ranked-team will receive one share, with an additional share added to every rank so that the highest-ranked team receives 32 shares, or 35.46mn euros. Real Madrid, winners for the last three seasons, top the coefficient rankings followed by Barcelona, Bayern Munich, Atletico Ma-

ดริด, Manchester United, Chelsea, Juventus, Porto, Arsenal and Benfica.

All 32 teams in the group stage will also get a starting fee of 15.65mn euros - which combined with the coefficient fee means that Real will receive a minimum 51.11mn euros. They will also receive a share of the 292mn euros in the market pool, which is distributed in accordance with the value of each national television market.

Teams will each receive a bonus of 2.7mn euros for every time they win a game in the competition and 900,000 euros for a draw. A further bonus will be paid every time they progress to the next stage of the competition, ranging from 9.5mn euros for the round of 16 and 15mn euros for the final.

In contrast, a club eliminated in the third qualifying round would receive between 480,000 euros and 1.37mn euros depending on how many rounds they had played.

UEFA estimated that its gross commercial revenue from next season's Champions League, Europa League and Super Cup combined was around 3.25bn euros.

ROUND-UP

Arsenal sign Juventus and Switzerland full-back Lichtsteiner on free transfer

The Guardian
London

Arsenal have announced the signing of the Switzerland defender Stephan Lichtsteiner on a free transfer from Juventus.

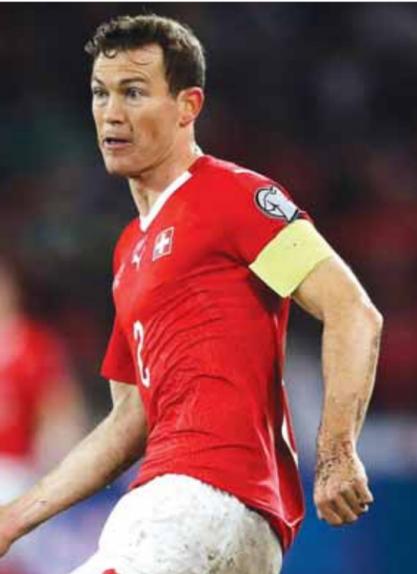
The 34-year-old attacking full-back, who becomes Unai Emery's first signing at the club, won the domestic title in each of his seven seasons at Juve and made 27 Serie A appearances in the campaign that has just finished despite the arrival of Mattia De Sciglio from Milan.

He is closing in on a century of caps for Switzerland, appearing at two European Championships and two World Cups. Emery said: "Stephan brings huge experience and leadership to our squad. He's a player with great quality with a very positive and determined attitude. Stephan will improve us on and off the pitch."

Lichtsteiner told his new club's official website: "It is a great moment for me, after Juventus, to come to Arsenal. It is a project to come back into the Champions League, it is hard to see a club like Arsenal that is not playing in the Champions League if you see the players, the club, the stadium. The big objective is to come back on the highest level."

FREDERICKS AGREES FOUR-YEAR DEAL WITH WEST HAM
West Ham have agreed a deal to sign right-

The 34-year-old attacking full-back Stephan Lichtsteiner becomes Unai Emery's first signing at Arsenal.



back Ryan Fredericks from Premier League new boys Fulham. The 25-year-old will pen a four-year contract to become new manager Manuel Pellegrini's first signing when his present terms with Fulham expire on 1 July.

"We've been speaking about it for a while and trying to get things in place and finally, we've got it over the line," Fredericks told the Hammers' official website. "It's amazing for this deal to finally happen."

SPOTLIGHT

Deschamps' France have enough class to succeed in Russia

Twenty years after their only World Cup success, France believe the time for a repeat has come

By Richard Williams
The Guardian

Napoleon met disaster in Russia after sending almost half a million soldiers on an invasion that began in the summer of 1812 and ended in humiliation. Didier Deschamps, with only 23 men in his Grande Armée, will be hoping for a better outcome in the coming weeks. For a start the inhabitants of Moscow are unlikely to have burnt the place to the ground by the time his squad pitch camp next week in a Hilton hotel 50km west of the city walls.

France are ranked fourth in the World Cup betting behind Brazil, Germany and Spain. Twenty years after their only success in the competition they may even be justified in examining their impressive resources and believing that the time for a repeat has finally come.

Last week *L'Équipe* reprinted the edition published on Monday, 13 July, 1998, the morning after France discovered that it was, after all, a football nation. "Pour l'éternité" rang the sonorous headline, and the team who beat Brazil by three unanswered goals in Saint-Denis did indeed join the immortals – even Stéphane Guivarc'h, the centre-forward whose selection for the final provided a definition of the phrase *faute de mieux*, meaning "for the lack of anything better".

In effect France won the tournament without a functioning forward line. Their three goals in the final were scored by two midfielders, Zinedine Zidane and Emmanuel Petit.

Earlier their continued presence had been secured only by a central defender, Laurent Blanc, scoring the only goal in an excruciating performance against Paraguay in the round of 16, and a full-back, Lilian Thuram, whose double defeated Croatia in the semi-final.

Four years later in South Korea their main forwards, Arsenal legend Thierry Henry, David Trezeguet and Djibril Cissé, could manage not a single goal between them, despite being the leading scorers in England, Italy and France respectively.

It had not always been so. Picking his all-time greatest France XI on this website at the weekend Marcel Desailly felt able to omit both Just Fontaine, still the top scorer for a single competition with 13 goals in six matches during the 1958 World Cup finals, and his great partner Raymond Kopa, the winner of the Ballon d'Or that same year.

And how different, too, things look today, even in a side which Christophe Dugarry, a veteran of 1998 turned radio pundit, claims to be lacking in "character, mental strength and determination".

In their last 13 matches Deschamps' men have scored 30 goals, displaying an attacking potency at least equal to that of any other Russia-bound nation. A possible front trio of PSG's Kylian



French President Emmanuel Macron (centre), his wife Brigitte Macron (centre, 2nd row), French Sports Minister Laura Flessel (second left), French Football Federation President Noel Le Graet (second right) and France's head coach Didier Deschamps (right) pose with France players in Clairefontaine-en-Yvelines yesterday. (AFP)

Mbappé, Atlético Madrid's Antoine Griezmann and Barcelona's Ousmane Dembélé offers speed of thought and foot, with a 19-year-old and a 21-year-old flanking a man who, at 27, has the experience of 53 caps and three successful seasons satisfying Diego Simeone's demands. And Olivier Giroud, if he does not start, can leave the bench to add physical presence.

In midfield they look equally well equipped with Paul Pogba and Blaise Matuidi in front of N'Golo Kanté.

The young Corentin Tolisso of Bayern Munich is ready to play a part should Pogba, for example, disappoint, although Deschamps described the Manchester United player as "indispensable" following a mediocre performance in the 3-1 win over Italy in Nice on Friday night. In an official pre-tournament photograph of the squad posing infor-

mally in their stylish navy blue suits, Kanté is invisible, hidden behind the prominent figure of Pogba.

That is how he likes it, but his presence gives the team a player who not only snuffs out imminent danger with the minimum of drama but launches instant counterattacks with crisp passes of perfect weight and angle.

Kanté will be the dynamic soul of Deschamps' France, his alertness and mobility vital factors in compensating for any flaws in defence. Against Italy the head coach deployed two fast and attack-minded 22-year-old full-backs, Benjamin Pavard of Stuttgart and Lucas Hernández of Atlético, to promising effect. But Samuel Umtiti had an unhappy night against the resurgent Mario Balotelli and Raphaël Varane is likely to return alongside Adil Rami in central defence in front of the captain,

Hugo Lloris, who is on schedule to win his 100th cap in the group stage.

Only five men – Lloris, Varane, Pogba, Griezmann and Matuidi – who started their quarter-final defeat by Germany in the Maracanã four years ago are likely to be named for France's opening match against Australia on 16 June.

This turnover speaks clearly about the volume of top-quality players constantly produced by France's clubs and the national training scheme centred on Clairefontaine, one of the wonders of the football world 20 years ago and still a model for other nations.

The varied ethnic composition of the 1998 squad offered another kind of example. The team of blacks, blancs and beurs (North Africans) may not have magically turned France's suburbs into oases of multicultural tranquillity but they certainly made some parts of the

nation more aware of the existence and contribution of others. Their successors could reinforce the message with goals from Griezmann (parents of German and Portuguese origin), Mbappé (Cameroonian father, Algerian mother), and Dembélé (mother of Mauritian and Senegalese descent, father from Mali).

As for the head coach, the shadow of his old teammate Zidane, suddenly at a loose end and known to fancy a crack at managing the national team, has fallen over a contract due to expire after the Euros in 2020.

Deschamps, who can point to a record of leading France to the quarter-finals four years ago and finishing runners-up to Portugal at Euro 2016, is laughing off the inevitable questions. But if he needed another incentive to take the coming campaign to a triumphant conclusion, there it is.

FOCUS

Iran first team to arrive in Russia

Iran became the first team yesterday to arrive in Russia for the World Cup, a month-long celebration of football that kicks off in Moscow's historic Luzhniki Stadium on June 14. Playing in their fifth finals and ranked 36 by FIFA, Iran begin their campaign against Group B rivals Morocco on June 15 in Nizhny Novgorod.

They then travel to Kazan for a June 20 clash against former World Cup winners Spain, before concluding their group stage matches against Portugal on June 25. The three-time Asian Cup winner easily qualified for their second successive World Cup, going unbeaten in 10 matches in their Asian group.

Iran lost 2:1 to Turkey in their last friendly on May 28, and have one last World Cup warm-up against Lithuania on June 8. Coached by Portugal's Carlos Queiroz, who has also managed his national side, Iran are long-shots to make their first knockout stage of a World Cup. European bookmakers put their odds of winning the whole thing at 500 to 1.

They will be based at the training facilities of the Russian Premier League club Lokomotiv Moscow, on the Russian capital's southwestern outskirts. Grouping 32 nations, the World Cup concludes in Moscow on July 15.

On Monday, Iran announced its final 23-man line-up with arguably its most accomplished squad ever and the wind in its sails after an unbeaten run through qualifiers.

UEFA BAN BUFFON FOR THREE MATCHES AFTER REFEREE RANT

Outgoing Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon was yesterday banned for three European matches for his red card and comments about referee Michael Oliver after the Italian side's dramatic Champions League quarter-final loss to Real Madrid. The 40-year-old had been charged both with breaching UEFA's "general principles of conduct" over his outburst and also for his red card for dissent. European football's governing body announced yesterday that Buffon was suspended for "three UEFA competition matches for which he would be otherwise eligible".

The last-eight clash between holders Real and Juventus was decided by a last-gasp Cristiano Ronaldo penalty after the Serie A champions had staged a remarkable comeback to wipe out a 3-0 first-leg deficit at the Santiago Bernabeu.

But Buffon, who was sent off in the aftermath of the penalty decision, lashed out at Oliver's decision to award the spot-kick, saying the English official had a "rubbish bin for a heart".

The 2006 World Cup winner, who did not renew his contract with Juventus, could however be playing for Paris Saint-Germain next season.

He said on Monday he needed a week before making a decision on whether to head to French capital or not.

QATAR UNDER-21 TEAM FINISHES 12TH IN TOULON TOURNAMENT IN FRANCE



Qatar finished 12th in the under-21 Toulon tournament after losing to South Korea 1-2 at the Stade d'Honneur in Mallemort, France, yesterday. The victory gave South Korea a 11th-place finish. For Qatar, Abdulsalam scored, while South Korea's two strikes came from Jeon and Cho.

NBA

Golden Warriors find motivation in quest to join immortals

'We're all victims of our expectations that we've set. But we are all in this together'

AFP
Cleveland

Seeking a third title in four seasons and a place among the NBA's immortal dynasties, the Golden State Warriors have drawn motivation from a dwindling list of unachieved accomplishments.

In 2015, they won the team's first title in 40 years. In 2016, they had the NBA's best-ever season at 73-9 but fell one win shy of a crown. In 2017, they had a 16-1 playoff run, missing a perfect post-season with a penultimate-game loss.

Now matched against Cleveland for the fourth consecutive finals, the Warriors have a chance to join an elite set of clubs with three titles in four seasons - the 1960s Boston Celtics dynasty, the 1990s Michael Jordan-led Chicago Bulls and the Lakers from the Kobe Bryant and Magic Johnson eras in Los Angeles and George Mikan's 1950s team in Minneapolis.

"It's extremely hard," said Warriors guard Shaun Livingston, who joined Golden State before the first title run. "This has been the hardest season, I think, as a team, just from our accomplishments - the journey, the longevity of it. It's hard.

"It sounds ridiculous, because we're winning a championship. It's just mentally and emotionally you put so much into the game every year, going through the ups and downs.

"But I think we're chasing greatness. We're chasing history, some of those things that are achievable for a team like us. So that's where we have to try to find the motivation. It's kind of the game within the game."

As the best-of-seven NBA Finals shift to Cleveland for game three Wednesday, with Golden State owning a 2-0 lead after a 122-103 home victory Sunday, the Warriors can start to ponder their place among the all-time best.

"We're all victims of our expectations that we've set," War-



Golden State Warriors' Stephen Curry speaks to media following game two of the NBA Finals at Oracle Arena. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

riors guard Stephen Curry said. "But we are all in this together. There's not much anyone has to go over or say."

Curry draws inspiration from recalling his 26-56 rookie campaign in 2009-10.

"What we've been able to do here from my rookie year, there's an awareness of where we were to where we are. And I appreciate it," Curry said. "That's why when I get to this stage it's always like it's brand new because of how hard it was to get here in the first place."

Euphoric and devastating

Warriors coach Steve Kerr was a guard in Chicago's dynasty run and has warned players about letdowns.

"He has been there and says it's just harder and it's human nature to let your guard down," Livingston said. "He understands what it takes and he understands the pitfalls that come with it."

Kerr also understands the great things on offer.

"This is fun," Kerr said. "If you can be part of a team that's this good and give yourself a chance, that's what you want. It's devastating when you lose, and it's euphoric when you win. But that's sports."

"We're competing for something that's really important. We could all go do something else and live a much more balanced life, but we all kind of like this opportunity to compete. And

you have to accept what comes with that."

And with reaching four finals in a row.

"It's obviously harder to get here than performing when you get to this stage, because you can play off adrenaline and knowing the end is near helps," said Warriors guard Klay Thompson.

"But getting to this point is a long grind and it should not be taken for granted that we're here for the fourth straight time. This is not normal. We're going to make the most of it."

'One of the best ever'

Curry laughs at the idea he is missing something without an NBA Finals Most Valuable Player award.

"That's kind of the nature of the beast being on this stage four times in a row. You've always got to look at what you don't have," Curry said.

"There's always that thing about society always looking. Can you attain more and more and more? That's fine. It's part of my motivation to try to get back to this stage because I want more championships."

No one appreciates the Warriors' hunger more than Cleveland's LeBron James, playing in his eighth consecutive final and ninth overall with a 3-5 record.

"They're great, actually," James said. "Golden State is one of the best teams I've ever played. It's one of the best teams that has ever been assembled."

SPOTLIGHT

Thompson's dad hints son won't sign extension soon

Reuters
New York

The reigning NBA champion Golden State Warriors have reportedly been talking about a new contract with All-Star shooting guard Klay Thompson since last month.

It may be another month, or more, until the two sides find a compromise to keep Thompson by the Bay.

The Athletic reported three weeks ago that the Warriors and the four-time All-Star have engaged in discussions on a contract that would keep him in Oakland for at least another five years - at a discount rate to also help the club retain All-Stars Kevin Durant and Draymond Green for years as well.

Thompson's father, Mychal, was asked by 95.7 The Game on Monday if a new extension was close to being announced. Mychal, who played 12 seasons in the NBA, played coy in insinuating that negotiations are far from complete.

"Klay definitely wants to play his whole career in Golden State and the Bay Area - there's no question about that," Mychal said. "He loves it up there... loves the fans."

"But let's just say that nego-

tiations will probably continue in the summer of '19."

The 28-year-old has one year remaining on his contract and could make a maximum of \$121 million over five years if he agrees to a four-year extension. If he plays out his contract next season and then signs a five-year deal with Golden State, Thompson could make a maximum of \$188 million in the new deal.

If Thompson were to sign elsewhere as a free agent after next season, the maximum deal he could get would be four years for \$139 million.

According to the Athletic report, Thompson is considering a four-year extension, but worth only \$92 million - a five-year value of \$111 million when you include his 2018-19 salary.

In an interview with Bleacher Report's Ric Bucher after news of the reported offer became public, Thompson said "it would be hard for me to envision going anywhere else."

The two-time NBA champion shot a career-best 48.8 percent from the field this season, including 44 percent from beyond the 3-point line - also a career high. Thompson averaged 20.0 points per game in the regular season, the fourth consecutive season he has averaged at least 20 ppg.



Klay Thompson of the Golden State Warriors attempts a layup over Tristan Thompson of the Cleveland Cavaliers during the third quarter in game 2 of the 2018 NBA Finals at ORACLE Arena in Oakland, California. (Getty Images/AFP)

FOCUS

Cavaliers face now-or-never home stand

AFP
Cleveland

Defending champion Golden State has seized command of the NBA Finals as the series shifts to Cleveland, where the Cavaliers must continue their home playoff magic to sustain any title hopes.

The Warriors, seeking their third crown in four seasons, could complete a sweep in the best-of-seven showdown with road wins Wednesday and Friday after taking a 2-0 edge with a 122-103 home triumph Sunday.

"I don't think we're close to our ceiling, which is good for us," said Warriors forward Draymond Green. "We can play so much better. We're going to need that going out on the road."

While the Cavaliers made the greatest comeback in NBA Finals history from 3-1 down to beat Golden State in 2016, no team has ever rallied from 3-0 down to win the title. "We have to make sure that we really bring it in game three because that's really the game right there," Cavs forward Kevin Love said. "This is a team you don't want to be down 0-3 against."

The Cavaliers are 8-1 at home in this year's playoffs, losing only in their first-round opener against Indiana. "We feed off our crowd. We really get up to play at home. We know that come Wednesday we're going to have to be better," Love said. "Just be-

ing in front of our crowd will be huge for us." But the Cavaliers, facing Golden State in the finals for the fourth year in a row, are only 4-4 against the Warriors at home in all finals.

"We have to do a better job at home," Cavs guard JR Smith said. "We can't keep taking positives from losses. We're doing some good things, but it's not translating into Ws so we've got to figure it out."

James wants discomfort

The Cavaliers were the most recent victims of an NBA Finals sweep, being blanked by San Antonio in 2007 in the first finals trip for LeBron James, now playing in an eighth consecutive finals and ninth overall.

"It sucks to lose, that's for sure, but it definitely won't stop me from preparing to be better," James said. "We've played some really good basketball on our home floor. But that shouldn't give us any comfort. We should still be uncomfortable."

"Just because we're going home doesn't mean we can relax. This is the last team in the world you want to relax against."

James won two titles with Miami and achieved his goal of bringing a crown to his home region, but the four-time NBA Most Valuable Player would fall to 3-6 in the finals with a loss this year. The Warriors have imposed themselves upon the Cavs early and see that as crucial for more success.

"We've got to come out with a

sense of urgency to start," Warriors forward Kevin Durant said. "They have only lost one game so they are very confident there. We've just got to come out, stick to our game plan, keep playing hard and we'll be fine."

Warriors won't relax

It will be hard for Golden State to top game two, when Stephen Curry sank a finals-record nine 3-pointers in a 33-point effort.

"We had some slip-ups and things we can correct going into game three," Curry said. "But the energy and effort and physicality and all that from the jump was pretty dialed in and it gave us a lot of momentum and confidence."

Warriors guard Klay Thompson, playing despite a left ankle injury in the opener, says Golden State has a strong focus knowing the Cavaliers rallied from 2-0 down to beat Boston in the Eastern Conference finals.

"It's nothing to feel happy about being up 2-0," Thompson said. "This team plays great at home and we expect their other guys to play even better at home, too, not just LeBron, so we're not going to relax at all."

Cavaliers coach Tyronn Lue stressed the need for a body-banging style from his squad.

"We have to start the game better, being more physical," Lue said. "It was too easy for them. They ran around a little too freely. They might get some shots, but we've got to take away the easy ones."



Cleveland Cavaliers forward LeBron James drives to the basket during the second quarter in game two of the 2018 NBA Finals against Golden State Warriors at Oracle Arena. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

NHL

Capitals down Knights to move within one win of Stanley Cup crown

'We hit two posts, we had some good chances and we got nothing out of it'

AFP
Washington

The Washington Capitals beat the Las Vegas Golden Knights 6-2 on Monday to move within one win of the first NHL Stanley Cup championship in their 43-year history.

The Capitals now lead the best-of-seven Stanley Cup finals three-games-to-one and will try to finish off the Golden Knights in game five in Las Vegas on Thursday.

The Caps withstood a quick opening barrage from Vegas, scoring three first-period goals to seize control.

Russian Evgeny Kuznetsov produced four assists, including one on T.J. Oshie's power-play goal 9:54 into the first period to open the scoring.

Nicklas Backstrom with three assists and Oshie with a goal and two assists had three points apiece and goalie Braden Holtby made 28 saves for Washington.

"One win away - it's the hardest one," said Washington captain Alex Ovechkin, whose assisted on Devante Smith-Pelly's goal with 21 seconds left in the first.

That strike made it 3-0 after Tom Wilson's goal at 16:26.

The Golden Knights had looked more likely to take charge, producing five of the game's first seven shots.

But James Neal missed from point-blank range - just one of a string of Vegas shots to clank off the post - and the close call appeared to galvanise the Caps.

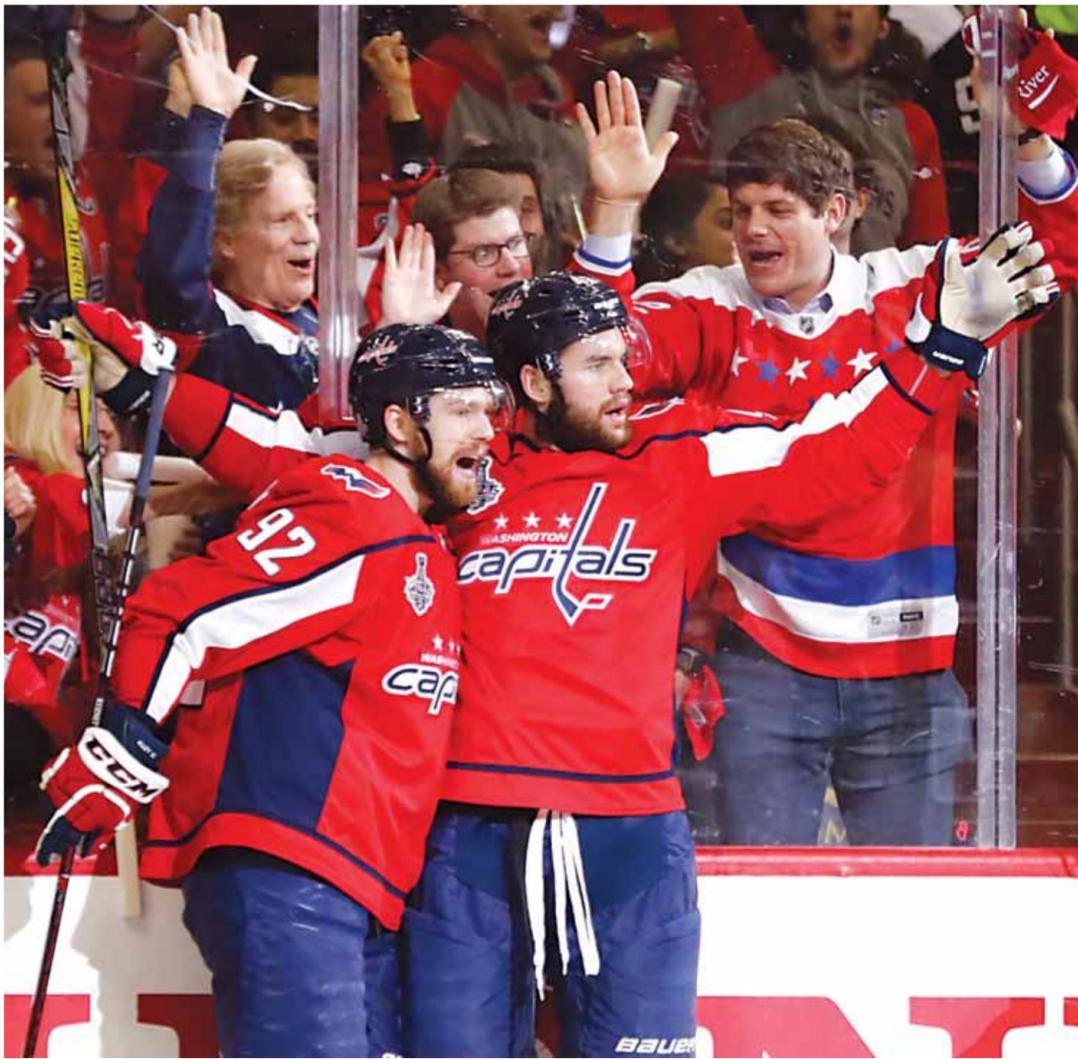
Oshie scored from the slot off the rebound of a Kuznetsov shot, collecting the puck with his skate and firing over Marc-Andre Fleury.

Wilson scored off a give-and-go with Kuznetsov and Smith-Pelly scored from below the left circle.

A little luck

"We knew this game was very important for us," Ovechkin said. "Obviously we have a little bit of luck on our side, they hit the post. But we just grinded it out, we use our chances, stick to the system, stick to the plan, and we get the result."

Vegas coach Gerard Gallant called it a "frustrating" first period.



Washington Capitals right wing Tom Wilson (right) celebrates with center Evgeny Kuznetsov after scoring a goal against the Vegas Golden Knights in the first period in game four of the 2018 Stanley Cup Final at Capital One Arena. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

"I thought we played our best period of the finals so far," he said. "We hit two posts, we had some good chances and we got nothing out of it."

John Carlson made it 4-0 with a one-timer from the left circle on a power-play at 15:23 of the second before Vegas narrowed the deficit

with goals from Neal and Reilly Smith in the third.

Fleury made 17 saves for the Golden Knights, but Michal Kempny scored just 1:13 after Smith to stretch Washington's lead to 5-2 and Brett Connolly scored a 5-on-3 power-play goal to make it 6-2 with less than two

minutes remaining. Vegas have now lost three straight games - after losing three games total in the first three rounds of the playoffs. They face a mountain to climb to become the first debut team in major US sports history to win the title in the first season of their existence. The last NHL team to re-

bound from a 3-1 series deficit to win the Stanley Cup was the 1942 Toronto Maple Leafs - who rallied from 3-0 down against the Detroit Red Wings. The Capitals, meanwhile, are on the brink of bringing Washington its first major sports title since the NFL's Redskins won the 1992 Super Bowl.

SPOTLIGHT

Mayweather heads *Forbes* money list, but no women in top 100

AFP
Los Angeles

Boxer Floyd Mayweather reclaimed his place at the top of *Forbes*' annual ranking of the 100 highest-paid athletes yesterday but no woman featured on the list for the first time.

Forbes reported that Mayweather, 41, topped sports highest-earners after banking \$275 million dollars from his cross-combat superfight against mixed martial arts star Conor McGregor in August 2017.

With an additional \$10 million in endorsements, Mayweather earned a total of \$285 million between June 1 2017 and June 1 2018, comfortably eclipsing the second-placed figure on the list, football star Lionel Messi, who made \$111 million. However, female athletes notably failed to break into the top 100 for the first time since *Forbes* began publishing its ranking.

Tennis star Serena Williams, who last year was the only woman to feature on the list at 51st place with earnings of \$27 million, dropped out of the rankings after taking a break from the sport due to the birth of her daughter.

Former welterweight king Mayweather, who came out of retirement to face McGregor in Las Vegas, topped the rankings for the fourth time in seven years.

McGregor meanwhile vaulted up the rankings to fourth spot, thanks to his \$85 million cut of the Mayweather purse.

A further \$14 million in endorsements took the Irish fighter's earnings to \$99 million, just behind Real Madrid soccer star Cristiano Ronaldo, who was third with earnings of \$108 million.

Brazilian footballer Neymar was fifth on the list with \$90 million in earnings, his salary boosted by his record-breaking transfer from Barcelona to Paris Saint-Germain last year.

NBA icon LeBron James was the highest-paid basketball player to feature on the list, coming in at sixth with total earnings of \$85.5 million, just ahead of men's tennis king Roger Federer, who earned \$77.2 million.

Swiss ace Federer remains the most attractive athlete for sponsors, with endorsement deals accounting for \$65 million of his earnings.

Golden State Warriors star Stephen Curry was the only other NBA player to feature in the top 10, with earnings of \$76.9 million.

Atlanta Falcons quarterback Matt Ryan is the highest earning NFL player, coming in at ninth with \$67.3 million. Ryan's earnings were swollen by a \$45 million dollar signing bonus after he agreed a new contract earlier this year.

Another NFL quarterback, the Detroit Lions' Matthew Stafford rounded out the top 10 with \$59.5 million.

Elsewhere, Britain's Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton is the highest paid figure from motorsport to feature, coming in at 12th with \$51 million.

Tiger Woods, who has not won a tournament for five years and who has barely played over the previous three seasons, remains the highest earning golfer with \$43.3 million, with \$42 million of it coming through endorsements.



Floyd Mayweather.

MLB

Giants stay hot, rip Diamondbacks 10-3

Reuters
San Francisco

Andrew McCutchen and Brandon Crawford hit back-to-back home runs to ignite a seven-run fourth inning Monday night, sending the San Francisco Giants to a 10-3 victory over the visiting Arizona Diamondbacks in the opener of a three-game series.

Pablo Sandoval and Nick Hundley also homered for the Giants, who won their fifth straight while snapping the Diamondbacks' winning streak at three. After Ketel Marte's two-run double gave Arizona a 2-0 lead in the top of the fourth, the Giants needed just six pitches to get even. McCutchen belted Zack Godley's fourth offering of the inning into the bleachers in left field, followed two pitches later by Crawford's blast to left-center. The homers were the fifth and seventh of the season, respectively, for McCutchen and Crawford.

Pinch hitter Alen Hanson and Buster Posey added two-run doubles before inning's end, making it a 7-2 game and sending Godley to an early shower.

Godley (5-5) went just 3 1/3 innings, allowing seven runs and five hits. He walked two and

struck out three.

Giants starter Derek Holland left for a pinch hitter in the fourth and thus did not qualify for the win. He allowed two runs and four hits in four innings, walking one and striking out five. Four Giants relievers backed Holland with five innings of one-run relief. Pierce Johnson (3-2), the third Giants pitcher, got the win after going two shutout innings, striking out two.

Sandoval had three hits while Posey and Crawford had two apiece for the Giants, who improved to 4-0 on their six-game homestand. Sandoval, Posey and Hanson drove in two runs each, while Sandoval and Crawford scored twice apiece. The home run was Sandoval's third of the season. Hundley's homer, which came in a pinch-hitting role, was his sixth of the year.

Marte's double was one of just two extra-bases hits for the Diamondbacks, who were opening a six-game trip after a 5-1 homestand. Jake Lamb drove in Arizona's third run with an eighth-inning single. The Diamondbacks, who were out-hit 11-7, have lost nine of their past 10 road games.

Tigers top Yanks, salvage doubleheader split
Aaron Judge whiffed his way to

history Monday.

The New York Yankees slugger set a major league record by striking out eight times in a doubleheader.

He finished the day 0-for-9 as the Yankees split a pair against the Tigers in Detroit. New York took the first game 7-4, then lost the nightcap 4-2.

In the second game, Judge struck out in all five of his at-bats.

"That's not just a rough day, that's a terrible day," Judge said. "But that's the beauty of baseball, you get to start fresh (Tuesday) in Toronto. There's nothing else you can do."

Yankees manager Aaron Boone said of the designated hitter/right fielder, "That's just the nature of his at-bats. He gets so deep in counts and he takes so many close pitches that he'll have the occasional day like this. But he could just as easily have put a big swing on one. I don't think he's fazed by that at all."

According to Baseball-Reference.com, the doubleheader strikeout record of seven had been held by Pat Seerey (Chicago White Sox, 1948), Dave Nicholson (White Sox, 1953), Frank Howard (Washington Senators, 1965), Bill Melton (White Sox, 1970), Mike Vail (New York Mets, 1975) and Shea Hillenbrand (Toronto Blue

Jays, 2005).

Judge is no stranger to strikeouts. He led the majors with 208 K's as a rookie in 2016, though he also topped the American League in home runs (52), runs (128) and walks (127).

This month, he is 2-for-19 (.105) with one homer and 13 strikeouts, prompting Boone to say Judge might get a day off Tuesday. For the year, Judge is batting .276 with 16 homers and 43 RBIs.

He has fanned 83 times and walked 44 times in 57 games. Teammate Giancarlo Stanton can understand what Judge is experiencing.

He went 0-for-5 with five strikeouts on April 3 against the Tampa Bay Rays, then went 0-for-7 with five whiffs on April 9 against the Baltimore Orioles.

"He'll bounce back," Stanton said of Judge, according to the *New York Post*.

"I've gone through it. He's gone through it. He'll bounce back for sure. Throw it in the trash and he'll help us in Toronto."

RESULTS

Yankees	2	Tigers	4
Padres	11	Braves	4
Angels	9	Royals	6
Giants	10	Diamondbacks	3



San Francisco Giants outfielders left fielder Hunter Pence, centre fielder Gorkys Hernandez and right fielder Andrew McCutchen during their MLB game against the Arizona Diamondbacks at AT&T Park in San Francisco. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

RUGBY

New skipper, new vibe in camp hailed by Bok's Vermeulen

'He's a great choice. He's a good leader and I think a lot of guys look up to him'

Reuters
Johannesburg

Key South African looseforward Duane Vermeulen says there is a new positive atmosphere around the Springbok camp since a change of coach and hailed the choice of former Stormers team mate Siya Kolisi as stand-in captain.

Vermeulen, 31, was among the top candidates to lead South Africa in this month's three-Test series against England after injury ruled out both Warren Whiteley and Eben Etzebeth, who had skippered the side over the last year.

But Kolisi was chosen ahead of him, the first black player to lead the Springboks in a symbolic move that is wholly merited, according to Vermeulen.

"He's a great choice. He's a good leader and I think a lot of guys look up to him," the Toulon player told a news conference in Johannesburg yesterday. "I've got a lot of respect for him, on and off the field. He's a really great guy and a guy that can inspire this group of people."

"I always knew that there was something special about Siya, even during those early days at the Stormers."

"As it is with younger players, it took him a few seasons to understand his game. That said, he's always been someone I've respected both on and off the field."

Vermeulen also praised the appointment of Rassie Erasmus as coach in March for lifting the mood around the team.

"Last year, it was almost as if one coach was coming to the end of his tenure. I remember coming into the squad and you could tell by the players' body language that they weren't in a good space," he said.

"There's a new energy about the group this year, with a new coach in place and a new style of play on the cards."

"I've got a burning desire to play for the Boks. I've walked a long road with Rassie and he's taught me a lot about the game. He's the right guy to take the team forward. Even at this stage of my career, I feel that I have room to grow and that Rassie has more to teach me."



Springboks' Duane Vermeulen during the press conference at Tsogo Sun Montecasino in Johannesburg yesterday.

Vermeulen, whose three-year contract with Toulon is up, is expected to be named on Thursday when Erasmus picks his side for the first test at Ellis Park on Saturday.

England's Launchbury doubtful for first Test

England lock Joe Launchbury is a doubt for Saturday's first Test against South Africa in Johannesburg due to a calf injury. It has forced him to train apart from the rest of the squad at England's coastal base in Durban as they prepare for the match against the Springboks at Ellis Park.

"It's difficult to say where we are at the moment. He's trained

and done a full session by himself, we will monitor that as it goes," England scrum coach Neal Hatley told reporters yesterday.

The 27-year-old Launchbury, who has 53 caps, was expected to scrum down alongside Maro Itoje in England's pack.

The tourists will be buoyed by the fact number eight Billy Vunipola took a full part in the session after playing through the last weeks of the domestic season with a persistent hamstring problem.

Vunipola won the last of his 34 England international caps against Ireland in March last year and has been plagued by injuries since.

Shortening Premiership season for Lions would be 'suicide': McCafferty

Curtailling English top-flight rugby's season to give the British and Irish Lions more time to prepare for their tour of South Africa in 2021 would be "suicide" for the domestic competition, Premiership rugby Chief Executive Mark McCafferty has said.

The Lions played 10 games in six weeks in New Zealand last year, including one match just days after arriving, and there have been calls to give them more time to prepare when they travel to South Africa. However, McCafferty told British media that the Lions had not even broached the subject with club rugby and that paring back the season would hurt the Premiership.

"To go in and out of different formats is suicide," McCafferty said. "For a product as strong as the Premiership to mess around, it would massively damage the brand. A bit like World rugby sometimes, the Lions seem to have a disdain about talking to the club organisations," he added. "I think a lot could be improved if people actually sat down, demonstrated a basic respect for the club game and said: 'How can we work together on this?'"

FOCUS

Former world champ Fury back in love with boxing

AFP
London

Troubled former world heavyweight champion Tyson Fury equated boxing to a marriage and that after a rocky period he is back fully in love again with the sport.

The 29-year-old - who has battled with depression which led to heavy drinking sessions and taking drugs - is set for his first bout in over two-and-a-half years on Saturday against Albanian Sefer Seferi in Manchester.

Fury, who dramatically took the world title (WBA/IBF/WBO belts) beating long-time holder Ukrainian Wladimir Klitschko in November 2015, told the BBC he has worked hard to resurrect his passion for boxing.

"Boxing is like a marriage - you have to work at it. You do fall in and out of love," said Fury.

"But I have spiced it back up again, bought her some sexy lingerie and we are back at it, better than ever."

Fury, who was cleared to fight again last December by UK Anti-Doping (UKAD) after accepting a backdated two-year ban for testing positive for the banned steroid Nandrolone, says this comeback is about "inspiring others who are suffering" with mental health issues.

"I woke up every day wishing I would not wake up any more," said Fury. "But I am living proof anyone can come back from the brink."

"There is a lot of people out there suffering with mental health problems who think all their days will be grey, but life can improve again and you will start to enjoy the little things again."

Fury's ambition is to regain the world crown with compa-

triot Anthony Joshua presently holding the WBA, IBF and WBO belts whilst American Deontay Wilder is the WBC titleholder.

"They are all afraid to fight one another," said Fury. "If any of us are going to be great champions, let's knock one another about. Let's have Royal Rumbles. The days of Ali, when he fought, Frazier, Foreman, everyone."

"Ali had three years out of the ring, had two fights and then lost to Frazier. Was it enough fights on his return? I don't know. But he got back to his glory."

"I'm not going to rush it. I'm 29, in the prime of my life and have never felt fitter, stronger or better. Rome wasn't built in a day. This is my second career now, coming back after nearly 1,000 days."

Meanwhile the father of Olympic Boxing gold medalist Katie Taylor was injured in a shooting near Dublin yesterday that left another man dead and a third also injured, Irish police and media reports said.

Irish police confirmed in a statement that a 30-year-old man "has died following a shooting incident in Bray, County Wicklow."

"Two other men, aged 35 and 57, who were injured in the incident, have been taken to hospital," the statement said.

A police spokesman said the gunman, who wore a high-visibility jacket, opened fire just as a group of around 15 or 20 people were about to begin a morning session at Bray Boxing Club.

The club is where Taylor started her amateur career before going on to win gold at the 2012 London Olympics.

The gym was established by her father, Pete Taylor, who Irish media reported was the 57-year-old injured in the shooting.

Fomer world No. 1 Scott gets US Open spot via qualifier

Former world number one Adam Scott is set to maintain his 17-year streak of competing in major championships after the Australian secured a spot in next week's US Open through a qualifying event in Columbus, Ohio on Monday. Scott has played in every major since the 2001 British Open and his 67 consecutive starts puts him behind only Spaniard Sergio Garcia (75). After slipping to 64th in the world, Scott was not ranked high enough to be given an automatic berth in the year's second major but earned his place at Shinnecock Hills by grabbing one of 14 spots up for grabs in Columbus. Competing in a field of 120 players, Scott carded a six-under-par 66 for the first round at Brookside Golf & Country Club and an even-par 72 at Lakes Golf & Country Club saw him squeeze into the qualifying spots with one stroke to spare. "It is a nice streak to keep going; it'd be better if I win the US Open," said Scott. "I'm playing all these majors to try and win them, not just to show up. I'd like to make the most of this opportunity. Only the top 60 players in the world are awarded a place in the US Open, and Scott's five-year exemption into all the majors that came with winning the 2013 Masters expired after last year's US Open at Erin Hills.

MOTORCYCLING

Pedrosa W to leave Honda team at end of sea-

Reuters
Paris

MotoGP world champion Marc Marquez will have a new team mate next year after Honda announced yesterday that Dani Pedrosa was leaving at the end of the season.

The 32-year-old Spaniard, whose top flight career has been plagued by injury and operations, has spent his entire grand prix career with the Japanese manufacturer since his 125cc debut in 2001.

"I want to thank HRC (Honda Racing Corporation) for all these years of great success. I have grown not only as a rider but also as a person with them," said the rider, who was 125cc champion in 2003 and took 250cc crowns in 2004 and 2005. "In life we all need new challenges and I feel it's time for a change."

Pedrosa has won 31 grands prix with Honda and is a three times runner-up in MotoGP.

He has yet to finish on the podium this year, however, and is currently 12th.

It has now emerged that Honda is keen on placing Lorenzo alongside reigning champion Marc Marquez for 2019 - and that it has already held preliminary talks with the 31-year-old.

Lorenzo, who won MotoGP titles with Yamaha in 2010, '12 and '15, had struggled since joining Ducati last year, but took a breakthrough maiden win in dominant style last weekend at Mugello.

Shortly after his victory, Lorenzo told Spanish media: "My story with Ducati is over."

"A part of me is sad because I know that with this bike I could have fought to be world cham-

pion, which is why I came here. Now it's too late. There is nothing to be done."

When it became clear he could leave Ducati at the end of his current contract, Lorenzo emerged as a prime target for Suzuki but it has since elected to pursue Moto2 ace Joan Mir instead.

Consequently, Lorenzo has been working on a return to the Yamaha fold with what is believed to be a Petronas-backed satellite ride alongside current VDS Honda rookie Franco Morbidelli.

This remains an option for Lorenzo - but should he elect to join forces with Honda, it would be logical that Pedrosa could end up on the satellite Yamaha instead.

In a separate statement following the announcement of his Honda departure, Pedrosa said further information on his future would be disclosed at MotoGP's next race weekend at Barcelona.

Honda signing Lorenzo would create a star-studded line-up for its works outfit, with the manufacturer having announced a new two-year contract for four-time champion and current points leader Marquez earlier this year.

Asked about the identity of his next teammate during his Formula 1 test outing in Austria, Marquez - who has only raced alongside Pedrosa since joining MotoGP - said: "It's something that Honda is discussing, trying to find the best teammate."

"At the moment I don't have the last news but I know that they were speaking with many many riders, as you know, as (previously) with (Johann) Zarco, (Andrea) Dovizioso."

"I think they will announce soon something. But I don't know, that's something that Honda needs to answer, I cannot say anything."



Repsol Honda Team's Dani Pedrosa during qualifying round of the Italian Grand Prix at Mugello Circuit, Scarperia, Italy, on Saturday. (Reuters)

SPOTLIGHT

Smith 'cried for four days' after tampering scandal

AFP Sydney

Former Australian captain Steve Smith admitted he cried for four days after a ball-tampering scandal in South Africa that rocked the sport, as he told children 'it's okay to show emotion'.

Australian cricket's golden boy was left devastated by the fall-out, breaking down at an emotional press conference on his return to Sydney after being sent home in disgrace.

Along with David Warner, he was banned from all international and domestic cricket for a year while opening batsman Cameron Bancroft was exiled for nine months for their part in attempting to alter the ball during the third Test in March.

Part of their punishment includes doing community service, and Smith attended a function at an exclusive Sydney



boy's school on Monday to promote a men's mental health charity, where he provided an insight into the toll it took.

"To be honest, I probably spent four days in tears," he told the students, according to the Seven Network which obtained audio of his comments.

"I was really struggling mentally. It certainly was the toughest thing that I've had to do."

The scandal initially unleashed a torrent of vitriol against Smith, but his harrowing and tearful Sydney press conference, where he was comforted by his father, sparked a

wave of sympathy.

Smith said he was fortunate to have close family and friends for support, and now wanted to send the message to youngsters that "you know, as a man it's okay to show emotion".

While banned from state and international cricket, Smith is allowed to appear at club level in Australia and in domestic tournaments abroad.

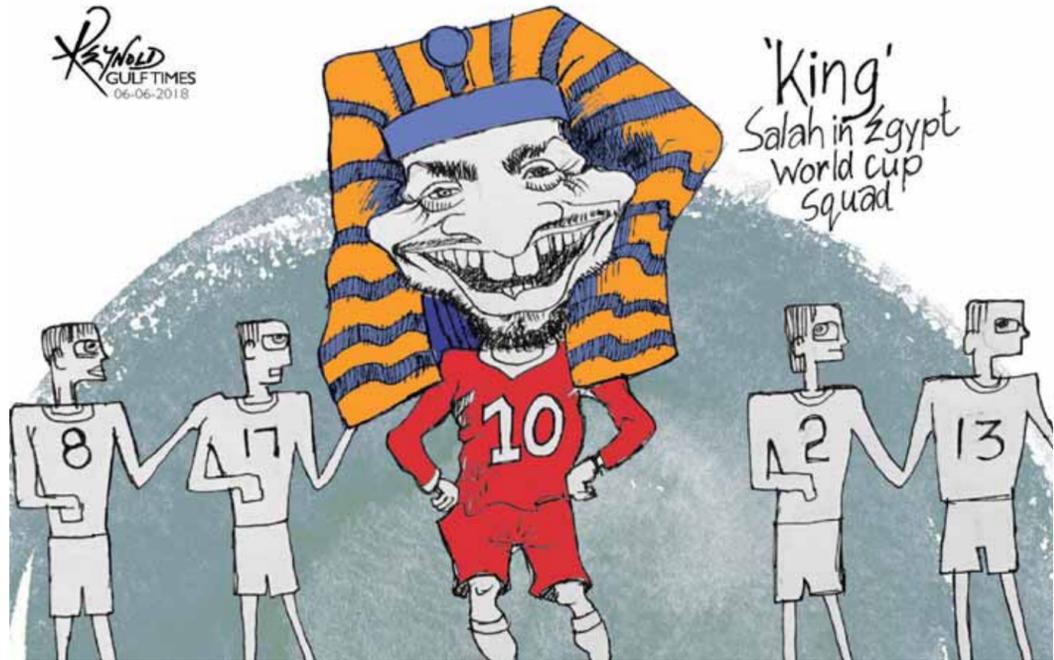
He has been training privately and is poised to return to the game at the inaugural Global T20 Canada event near Toronto from June 28-July 15, and said he couldn't wait.

"Two months down and counting," he said of his ban.

"Hopefully by the time I get back to the game I'm fresh and ready to perform at a really high level again."

Warner is also due to play at the Canada tournament while Bancroft is expected to make his comeback at a low-level limited-overs event in Darwin in July.

ON THE BALL



CRICKET

Khan's four-for helps Afghanistan clinch T20 series

Khan had also starred in Afghanistan's opening win of the series

AFP Dehradun

Spin sensation Rashid Khan claimed four wickets to set up Afghanistan's series-clinching win over Bangladesh in the second Twenty20 international yesterday in the north Indian city of Dehradun.

Khan's 4-12 helped restrict Bangladesh to 134-8 as the hosts surpassed the modest total to win by six wickets and take an unbeatable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

Samiullah Shenwari, who hit 49 off 41 balls, and Mohamed Nabi, with an unbeaten 31, took Afghanistan home with seven balls to spare.

The Afghans seemed to be in trouble at 79-3 in the 14th over but Nabi smashed three fours and two sixes to ensure smooth sailing for his team during his 15-ball blitz.

But it was the 19-year-old Khan who set up the victory with his triple strike in an over and was poised to claim a hat-trick after sending back Tamim Iqbal, who top-scored with 43, and Mosaddek Hossain on consecutive deliveries.

Abu Hider denied Khan the hat-trick and went on to hit an unbeaten 21 off 14 balls to give the Bangladesh total respect after the visitors elected to bat first.

Khan, who had also starred in Afghanistan's opening win of the series with his three wickets, got his second man of the match award.

Nabi also got two crucial scalps and even though fellow spinner Mujeeb Ur



Afghan cricket players celebrates the wicket of Bangladesh cricketer Sabbir Rahman during the second Twenty20 match against Bangladesh yesterday.

Rahman went wicketless the teenager gave away just 15 runs in his four overs.

Bangladesh off-spinner Mosaddek took two wickets to try and choke Afghanistan in their chase but the Bangladesh did not have enough runs on the board for their bowlers to defend.

The Asghar Stanikzai-led Afghanistan, who are tuning up for their debut Test against India starting June 14, are

scheduled to play the final match of the series tomorrow at the same venue.

BANGLADESH

Liton Das c Khan b Zadrán	1
Tamim Iqbal b Khan	43
Sabbir Rahman c Shenwari b Nabi	13
Mushfiqur Rahim st Shahzad b Nabi	22
Mahmudullah Riyad b Janat	14
Shakib Al Hasan c Najibullah b Khan	3

Soumya Sarkar c Stanikzai b Khan	3
Mosaddek Hossain b Khan	0
A. Hider not out	21
N. Islam not out	6
Extras (b4, lb2, w2)	8
Total (8 wickets, 20 overs)	134
Did not bat: Rubel Hossain	
Fall of wickets: 1 (Liton), 2-30 (Shabbir), 3-75 (Mushfiqur), 4-93 (Mahmudullah), 5-101 (Shakib), 6-103 (Tamim), 7-103 (Mosaddek), 8-108 (Soumya)	
Bowling: Rahman 4-0-15-0, Zadrán 4-0-42-1 (w1), Nabi 4-0-19-2, Janat 4-0-40-1, Khan 4-0-12-4 (w1)	
Afghanistan (target 135)	
M. Shahzad lbw b Abu Hider	24
U. Ghani c Soumya Sarkar b Rubel Hossain	21
S. Shenwari b Mosaddek Hossain	49
A. Stanikzai st Mushfiqur Rahim b Mosaddek Hossain	4
M. Nabi not out	31
S. Shafiq not out	0
Extras (lb2, w4)	6
Total (4 wickets, 18.5 overs)	135
Did not bat: N. Zadrán, R. Khan, K. Janat, M. Ur Rahman, S. Zadrán	
Fall of wickets: 1-38 (Shahzad), 2-57 (Ghani), 3-79 (Stanikzai), 4-115 (Shenwari)	
Bowling: Nazmul 4-2-14-0 (w1), Shakib 4-0-37-0, Rubel 3-5-0-38-1, Abu 3-0-14-1 (w3), Mahmudullah 1-0-9-0, Mosaddek 3-0-21-2	
Toss: Bangladesh	
Result: Afghanistan won by six wickets	
Series: Afghanistan lead the three-match series 2-0	
Umpires: Izatullah Safi (Afghanistan), Bismillah Jan Shinwari (Afghanistan), TV umpire: Ahmed Shah Pakteem (Afghanistan)	

PREVIEW

Sri Lanka aiming to capitalise on rare visit to West Indies

AFP Port of Spain

West Indies and Sri Lanka commence one of the most infrequent of international cricket assignments when the first match of a three-Test series begins today at the Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad.

More than 36 years since being granted Test status, this is just Sri Lanka's fourth Test tour of the Caribbean and the first involving more than two matches.

On their last campaign to the region ten years earlier, the team led by Mahela Jayawardene claimed their first Test victory in the West Indies in a shared rubber.

Sri Lanka will be keen to extend the form of their last seven matches in which they were beaten just once, away to top-ranked India, and enjoyed an historic 2-0 triumph over Pakistan in the United Arab Emirates while also prevailing at home over an improving Bangladesh side by the same margin in their last Test action in February.

However, their preparations for this series have been hampered by unexpected setbacks involving key players.

Concerns also linger over a number of seniors in the squad who are being managed very carefully with a view to ensuring their readiness for the World Cup in England in 11 months' time.

Opener Dimuth Karunaratne misses the tour because of injury, as do fast bowlers Dushmantha Chameera and Nuwan Pradeep.

Emerging batting star Dhananjaya de Silva was due in Trinidad on Monday having stayed at home when the touring party departed Colombo because of the shooting death of his father, a local councillor in the Sri Lankan capital, the evening before they were due to start the journey to the West Indies on May 25.

It is unlikely that he will be considered for the first Test although he is expected to be back in the key number three position come the second Test in St Lucia and the final match in Barbados, the first-ever day/night Test to be played in the West Indies.

Of the trio of senior statesmen in their side — left-arm spinner Rangana Herath, former captain Angelo Mathews and fast-

medium bowler Suranga Lakmal — only Mathews featured in the lone warm-up match ahead of the Tests, a drawn three-day fixture against a Cricket West Indies President's XI highlighted by captain Dinesh Chandimal's assured hundred.

All three are expected to play key roles in the quest for a first Test series triumph in the West Indies although Sri Lanka's selectors have already indicated that concerns over their long-term fitness are likely to result in their being rested for at least one of the three matches.

Despite a poor showing in their most recent Test series in New Zealand last December, the West Indies selectors have retained the bulk of that squad in the expectation of returning to the level of competitiveness they showed in earlier Test campaigns

More than 36 years since being granted Test status, this is just Sri Lanka's fourth Test tour of the Caribbean and the first involving more than two matches

in 2017 against Pakistan, England and Zimbabwe.

Devon Smith, the 36-year-old opening batsman, has been named in the 13-man squad on the strength of a prolific first-class season with the Windward Islands.

It remains to be seen if he can earn a spot in the final eleven at the expense of incumbent Kieran Powell and extend a Test career that looked over when he was dropped following the second Test of the home series against England in his native Grenada in 2015.

A Queen's Park Oval pitch which has acquired an unfortunate reputation for a turgid surface encouraging neither fast bowlers nor attacking batsmen is likely to result in the sort of dour battle of attrition which will examine both the stamina and concentration of both sides.

West Indies cricket remains in an almost perennial state of flux as their star players from the T20 franchise formats around the world continue to be ignored by the selectors, sparking considerable debate within the region, while an investigation into alleged match and spot-fixing by the international news network Al Jazeera has thrown an unwanted spotlight on the Sri Lankan game.

RAMADAN CUP

Khyber Club down Masters Club

By Sports Reporter Doha

Muftah claimed a hat-trick to fire Khan Youngsters to a seven-wicket triumph over Gulf Contracting Company in the Ramadan Cup Twenty20 Cricket Tournament, organised by the Qatar Cricket Association.

Batting first in a B and C Divisions match at the Asian Town Cricket Stadium, Gulf Contracting dismissed at 110 in 17 overs, failing to recover from the triple strike by Muftah.

In his very second over, left-arm fast bowler man-of-the-match Muftah first removed Sasnur for one and then sent back Dinesh and Alam for ducks to have the rivals struggling at 13 for three. Pujari, who struck three sixes and two fours in 39, and Sudesh (20 in 25 balls with two fours), held the middle-order together for some time and helped the team move into three



Muftah (L) and Gul Hayat.

figures. Jeevan cracked a six and two fours to make run-a-ball 16. Apart from Muftah,



who finished with three for 31, Ibrahim and Obaid got two each.

Shahzad launched an onslaught on the Gulf Contracting bowlers, hammering four sixes and half a dozen fours to compile 50 in just 24 balls. Mujtaba (19 with three fours) and Adnan (16 with four boundaries) enabled Khan Youngsters to wrap up the match in 8.2 overs.

In another match from the same category, man-of-the-match Gul Hayat inspired a 13-run victory for Khyber Club against Masters Club. Chasing a fighting 148-run target, Hayat struck three blows for 28, while Waqas and Nouman picked one each to restrict them at 134 for five in 18 overs. Omar Swadi made 33 with a six and four boundaries and Khadeer got 32, including three sixes. Ali chipped in with 26 in 36 deliveries.

Earlier, Ishtiaq and Murad set the tempo for Khyber Club's 147 all out. Ishtiaq hit two sixes in 18-ball 25, while Murad smashed a couple of sixes and a four in 23. Nouman and Rahman added 19 each to consolidate their team further. Khadeer, Talha and Omer shared six scalps.

England call up Ball as cover for injured Woakes

England seamer Jake Ball has been called up as cover for all-rounder Chris Woakes, who will miss the first part of this month's one-day series against Australia due to a thigh injury. Woakes, who sustained a right quad strain during last week's series-levelling Test win over Pakistan, was already ruled out of the one-off ODI against Scotland on June 10. The 29-year-old joins Ben Stokes on the sidelines as the latter recovers from a hamstring tear.

Both players have commenced their injury rehab programmes and will be hoping to respond to treatment with the aim of featuring in the latter stages of the series," the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said on Tuesday. Ball last played for England in their 4-1 ODI series win at Australia in January. England host Australia in five one-day matches starting at The Oval on June 13.