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Egypt and Nigeria splutter in warm-ups

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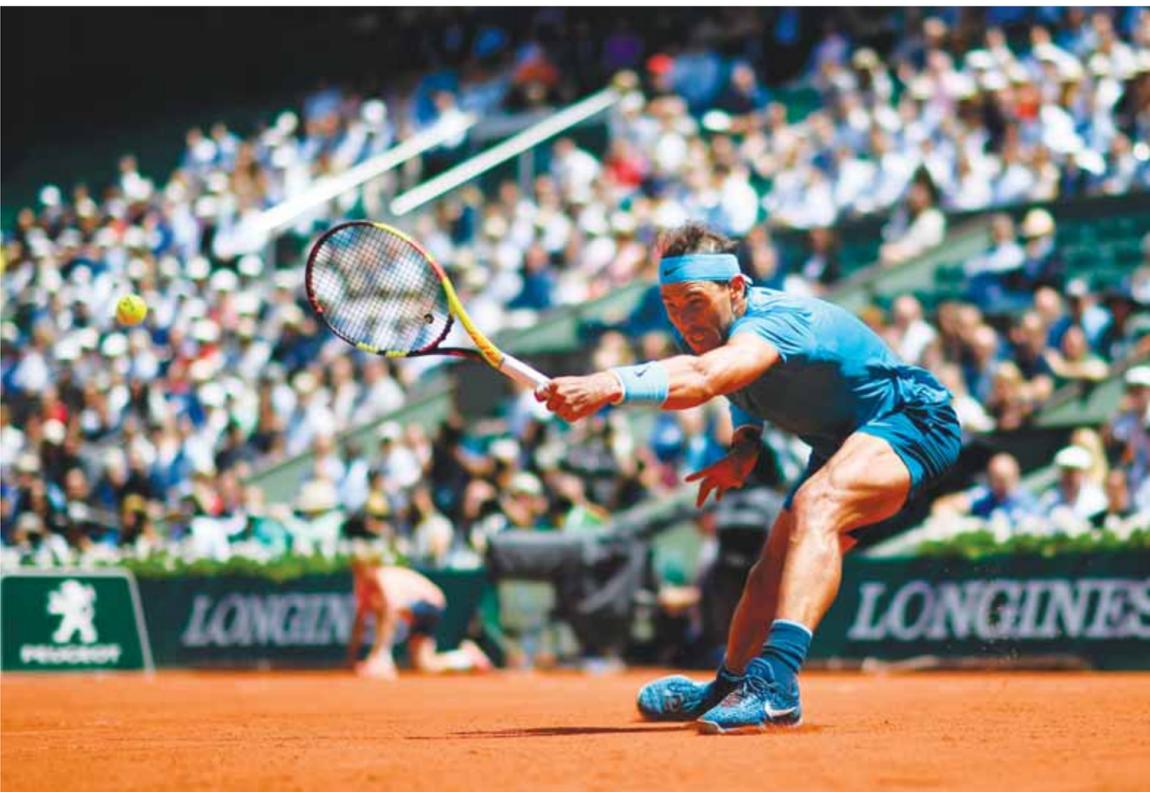
Briton Hamilton returns to favourite hunting ground

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TENNIS/FRENCH OPEN

Nadal and Del Potro set for semi-final thriller in Paris

HALEP, STEPHENS TO CLASH IN WOMEN'S FINAL



Spain's Rafael Nadal returns the ball to Argentina's Diego Schwartzman during their men's singles quarter-final match on day twelve of the 2018 French Open tennis tournament in Paris yesterday. At bottom, Del Potro in action during his match against Cilic.

DPA Paris

Rafael Nadal rallied back to beat Argentina's Diego Schwartzman 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 6-2 and conclude their rain-hit French Open quarter-final yesterday for a place in the elite final four.

He will now face another Argentine, Juan Martin del Potro, in today's semi-final, after Del Potro conquered Marin Cilic 7-6 (7-5), 5-7, 6-3, 7-5 in the other quarter-final affected by the weather.

A heavy downpour on Wednesday evening halted the men's contests after Nadal had dropped a set for the first time at this year's Roland Garros tournament, but he fought back to within two points of restoring parity in the second set at 4-6, 5-3 (30-15).

However, the 32-year-old, who has won 16 grand slam titles, including 10 on the famous red clay, showed no signs of weakness when play resumed on Court Philippe Chatrier as he grabbed 12 of the first 13 points to lead by a break after he capped the second set.

In the women's draw, world number one Simona Halep is through to her fourth grand slam final after she overpowered Spain's Garbine Muguruza 6-1, 6-4, in their semi-final clash in Paris.

"I'm really happy I won this match, it was very important for my mind to know I can beat a great opponent," said the 26-year-old Romanian. She will meet current US Open champion Sloane Stephens after the 25-year-old world number 10 dismissed compatriot Madison Keys 6-4, 6-4, in a repeat of last year's American major final in New York.

"I will be similar to today. I will play my game against [Stephens] as I did

RESULTS

Women (Semi-finals): Simona Halep (ROM x1) bt Garbine Muguruza (ESP x3) 6-1, 6-4; Sloane Stephens (USA x10) bt Madison Keys (USA x13) 6-4, 6-4

Men (Quarter-finals): Rafael Nadal (ESP x1) bt Diego Schwartzman (ARG x11) 4-6, 6-3,

6-2, 6-2; Juan Martin Del Potro (ARG x5) bt Marin Cilic (CRO x3) 7-6 (7/5), 5-7, 6-3, 7-5

Mixed doubles (Final): Laticha Chan/Ivan Dodig (TAI/CRO x2) bt Gabriela Dabrowski/Mate Pavic (CAN/CRO x1) 6-1, 6-7 (5/7), 10-8

last year," said Halep. "She's a strong opponent."

Halep earned a 4-0 head start in the opening 20 minutes as she stormed to the first set advantage with spiteful strokes, despite handing Muguruza a single break with rushed serving.

Muguruza, who won the Roland Garros event in 2016, found her rhythm and gained a 4-2 advantage in the second set, but Halep roared back to take the match in 92 minutes. Ha-

lep is searching for her maiden major title after failing in her three previous attempts, including last year's French Open final against then-19-year-old Jelena Ostapenko.

"I will try my best to win," Halep said. "This is my favourite grand slam and hopefully I will be better than last year."

"I will focus on myself, like I did every match here. And I will try just to be calm during the match and try

everything I can."

Schwartzman, ranked at number 12 in the world, had four chances to break Nadal back in the third set, but the world number one displayed impeccable defence, armed with a thunderous top-spun forehand in exhilarating exchanges for a 2-1 set advantage.

Nadal's opponent crumbled with a stack of errors in the fourth to concede a double break, but after the Argentine offered some resistance, Nadal went in for the kill with a fierce forehand to complete a three-hour-and-42-minute battle.

"The stop yesterday helps, because it was in a tough moment of my match," Nadal said. "He was playing great, and I was playing too defensive. I felt that I was playing a little bit under more stress than usual. I think after that I changed, I increased the intensity, increased the determination on how to play my shots, so the match changed drastically."

Del Potro, the tournament's fifth seed, was pegged at 6-6 and 5-5 in a first-set tie-break with Cilic, seeded third, before the rain came. The Argentine won the first two points to round off the first set and outlasted his Croatian opposite in lengthy rallies to win in three hours and 50 minutes. Nadal beat Del Potro in the semi-finals of last year's US Open and holds nine previous triumphs over the world number six, and he says he is now thriving off the pressure placed upon him to defend his French Open crown for an 11th Roland Garros success.

"Pressure is part of the sport in general. I don't feel the pressure now in semi-finals," Nadal said. "I feel the pressure every day, but not here. Del Potro has achieved great victories this year. This is an important event for me."



SPOTLIGHT

Same routine, different result hopes Halep

Reuters Paris

Romanian Simona Halep said the only thing she intends to change in her fourth Grand Slam final appearance is the result.

The 26-year-old world number one outplayed Garbine Muguruza in the French Open semi-final yesterday, winning 6-1 6-4 to put herself back within touching distance of finally lifting one of the sport's biggest prizes.

She has been there before of course and always fallen just short – most notably last year at Roland Garros when she was a set and 3-0 to the good against Latvian Jelena Ostapenko before being overwhelmed by an onslaught of winners.

Asked what she will do to avoid a fourth runners-up cheque she said: "I don't know what I will change. Probably nothing, because I will keep my routine," she told reporters.

"I have more experience now. I feel calm. I feel that I have to enjoy it today, the

victory, because it's a great match.

"And I have two more days until I will play the final. So I will stay chilled. I will relax. And then we will see what is going to happen Saturday. For sure I will fight for every ball."

By most people's reckoning, Halep is the best player of her generation still to land a Grand Slam, but contrary to what one might expect she does not lay in bed at night worrying about it.

"So I lost three times until now and no one died, so it will be okay," she smiled. "Of course, it's a big opportunity, it's a big chance, but you never know."

"But I will be more confident because I have a lot of experience? In tennis, you never know, so I will stay chilled."

Halep also lost the 2014 final in Paris to Maria Sharapova and suffered more heartbreak on a sweltering night in Melbourne in January when she went down in three sets to Caroline Wozniacki.

Asked again, however, what she had learned from those losses she quipped: "Can we change the subject? Let's talk about the beautiful weather! I will answer this question after the final. If I win, I will tell you."



McEnroe predicts tough return for Murray at Wimbledon

Paris: John McEnroe expects Andy Murray to battle past his hip problem and play at Wimbledon this year but has warned the Briton that he faces a tough test against hard-hitting opponents.

Former world number one Murray has not played a competitive match since losing in the Wimbledon quarter-finals last July and is on the mend after undergoing hip surgery in January.

The 31-year-old withdrew from this month's Rosmalen grasscourt tournament and could also skip the Queen's Club competition as he aims to return for the third grand slam event of the year, which kicks off on July 2. "He's gonna play because he loves to play," McEnroe told British media. "But I'm sure he would be realistic about what he could do if he did play. It would be tough to go a long way if he hasn't played."

"I had some hip issues... It's not a good feeling, particularly when guys are hitting it

harder than ever – even when I was playing. If you are not feeling quite right, it can be tough." Seven-times grand slam winner McEnroe says Murray will keep fighting to reclaim his position in the sport even if the three-times major champion risks "semi-humiliation".

"You keep giving yourself reasons as to why it's worth it, the upside. You know, it's worth taking semi-humiliation. You're still out there doing something you love, in a way. You're not as good as you were," the American said.

"I'm not even saying he won't be (as good as he was). I don't know what will happen, but it will be pretty tough to come back and be better than he was."

McEnroe, 59, compared Murray to Swiss ace Roger Federer and Serbian Novak Djokovic to highlight his point that some top players fully recover from serious injuries while others struggle.



FOCUS

Egypt and Nigeria continue to splutter in warm-ups

Belgium ease past Egypt 3-0 to extend latter's winless streak since qualifying for WC



Belgium's forward Eden Hazard (centre) vies for the ball with Egyptian players during the international friendly at the King Baudouin Stadium, in Brussels, on Wednesday. (AFP)

Reuters
Cape Town

Egypt and Nigeria continued their recent poor form in World Cup warm-up games on Wednesday ahead of their bids to become the first African side to reach the semi-finals of the global showpiece event.

Belgium eased past Egypt 3-0 in Brussels to extend the north African side's winless streak since qualifying for the tournament in Russia starting next week.

Eden Hazard provided the sparkle as Belgium dominated. The Chelsea forward set up Romelu Lukaku for the first goal and netted the second himself before halftime.

Marouane Fellaini added a third in stoppage-time to complete a strong performance by the hosts, who underlined

their status as one of the favourites in Russia.

Egypt were missing injured forward Mohamed Salah but their coach Hector Cuper said his talisman might be fit for the opening Group A game against Uruguay on June 15.

Nigeria turned in a disappointing performance in their final tune-up, losing 1-0 to the Czech Republic who failed to qualify for the World Cup.

Tomas Kalas gave the Czechs a deserved lead in the 25th minute in Schwchat, near the Austrian capital of Vienna, after he fired home a rebound following a corner to beat sprawling Nigerian goalkeeper Francis Uzoho.

Nigeria, who have lost three of their last four games and drawn the other, kick off their World Cup campaign against Croatia on June 16, but they looked disinterested during the opening half as the

Czechs dominated.

The Nigerians stepped up the pace in the second half – briefly interrupted by a rain delay – and created a few chances but could not find the net against a Czech side who conceded four goals against Australia last week.

Also playing on Wednesday were Panama, whose preparations ended on a low note as they slumped to a 1-0 defeat by Norway after an early goal by Joshua King.

PHYSICAL POWER

Worryingly for the Panamanians, who face Belgium, England and Tunisia in Group G in their first World Cup finals appearance, they struggled to deal with Norway's physical power, but they did create decent chances in the second half.

Earlier on Wednesday, Israel demanded that FIFA investigate what it said were threats against Argentina players that

forced them to cancel a match in Jerusalem, including Palestinian calls to burn replica shirts of Lionel Messi if he played.

But Palestinian football officials praised World Cup-bound Argentina and their captain Messi for calling off the friendly, which Israel had moved to Jerusalem from the coastal city of Haifa.

"The Israelis tried to use Messi and those stars from Argentina, and I would like to thank them and appreciate their decision," Palestinian Football Association President Jibril Rajoub told a news conference in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Israeli Sports Minister Miri Regev, who pushed for the game to be moved from Haifa to Jerusalem, dismissed accusations that her demand had caused its cancellation and said Messi, his team mates and his family had been threatened by "terror elements".

ARRIVALS

Spain, Panama arrive in Russia

AFP
Moscow

Former World Cup winners Spain and debutants Panama arrived in Russia yesterday for the 21st edition of the global football spectacle.

The pair and Saudi Arabia complete a trio of teams to have made it to Russia one week before next Thursday's kickoff in Moscow.

Spain won the World Cup in 2010 and are one of the tournament's favourites. They remain unbeaten in 19 matches under coach Julen Lopetegui, who took over the reins following the 2016 Euros.

Spain were seen off personally by King Felipe VI and will play their final warmup against Tunisia tomorrow by their base camp in the southern city of Krasnodar.

The Spaniards launch their campaign with one of the more anticipated group stage matches

– a June 15 clash against Iberian rivals Portugal in the 2014 Winter Olympics host city Sochi.

The winner will be in pole position to come out on top in a Group B that also includes Morocco and Iran.

Panama snuck past the United States and Honduras to clinch their first World Cup appearance on a dramatic last day of qualifiers in the CONCACAF region.

Panama will have to score more upsets to progress in a Group G that includes Belgium and England as well as a highly touted Tunisia side now ranked 14 by FIFA.

The Central Americans' preparations ended on a sour note in Oslo on Wednesday: they lost 1-0 and saw their hotel rooms get robbed during the game.

Police said objects worth around 53,000 euros (\$63,000) were taken.

Both teams' arrival was carried live by Russia's national rolling news channel.



(From left) Spain coach Julen Lopetegui, Spanish football federation (RFEF) president Luis Rubiales and team captain Sergio Ramos arrive at Krasnodar airport in Russia yesterday. (AFP)

Amazon.com to screen Premier League for first time

Reuters
London

Amazon.com has won rights to show 20 English Premier League soccer matches a season from 2019, giving its Prime Video online streaming service a foothold in the most watched sports league in the world. The US company secured one of two previously unsold three-year packages for UK rights, the Premier League said yesterday, with BT picking up the other to increase its access to live action. Amazon said it would make two rounds of games – the early December midweek games and the Christmas bank holiday games – and weekly highlights available to its Prime members in Britain for free. Premier League Executive Chairman Richard Scudamore said Amazon was an "exciting

new partner", and its Prime Video would provide "an excellent service on which fans can consume the Premier League". The deal underlines Amazon's ambition to take on traditional pay-TV broadcasters in the multi-billion dollar battle for sports rights.

Amazon Prime, which includes free delivery on purchases as well as music and video content, costs 79 pounds (\$106) a year in Britain. BT won the rights to show an additional 20 matches a season for 90m pounds (\$121m), taking its total to 52 games at a cost of 975m pounds for three years. Sky will continue to show the most games after agreeing in February to pay 3.58bn pounds for 128 matches a season for three years, including new Saturday evening fixtures. Amazon.com and the Premier League did not disclose the price achieved for the final package.

BOTTOMLINE

Injured Ozil to miss Germany's final World Cup warm-up

AFP
Berlin

Arsenal star Mesut Ozil will miss Germany's final warm-up match today with a knee injury, but the attacking midfielder's participation in the World Cup is not in danger, according to the German Football Association (DFB).

Ozil, 29, will sit out the friendly against Saudi Arabia in Leverkusen with light bruising to his left knee, but was able to run in training yesterday.

"I didn't take part in final team training today, but some running exercises were possible again," he wrote on his official Twitter account.

The midfielder, who picked up the injury in Saturday's shock 2-1 defeat away to Austria, has not taken part in full training over the last four days at Germany's pre-World Cup camp in Eppan, north Italy.

"It's nothing dramatic, we just don't want to take any risk and he was able to sprint in training. I assume he will be okay for the World Cup," said Germany's team director Oliver Bierhoff.

Ozil, who finished the 2017/18 season with a back injury, faces a race to get his knee ready for Germany's first

World Cup game against Mexico in Moscow on June 17 having also drawn South Korea and Sweden in Group F.

Germany, who are winless in their last five games, are set to name a full strength side against Saudi Arabia, who play hosts Russia in the World Cup opener next Thursday.

Bayern Munich star Jerome Boateng could play his first game since suffering a groin injury in April, "we assume that Jerome is now 100 % fit", said Bierhoff, but a final decision has not been taken.

With Ozil out, Paris Saint-Germain's Julian Draxler is set to fill the attacking midfield role with Chelsea's Antonio Rudiger stepping in for Boateng if needed.

World Cup winners Toni Kroos, Mats Hummels and Thomas Mueller are all set to return having sat out the Austria defeat with Timo Werner as the lone striker.

Having thrown away the lead against Austria, who enjoyed their first victory over their neighbours for 32 years, world champions Germany know they need to produce a good performance in their final game before flying to Russia on Tuesday.

"We've worked through the defeat, taken our mistakes to heart – tomorrow we want to do a much better job," said left-back Jonas Hector.



Midfielder Mesut Ozil stretches during a training session for the German national football team at the Runggghof training centre in Eppan, Italy, yesterday. (AFP)

Sane's Germany snub makes no sense, says Ballack

Reuters
Bengaluru

Germany manager Joachim Loew's decision to pick Julian Brandt over Leroy Sane in the nation's 23-man squad for the World Cup makes no sense, former captain Michael Ballack has said. Sane had his best season for Manchester City last campaign, scoring 10 goals to help the club seal the Premier League title and earning a PFA Young Player of the Year award in the process. However, Loew said a "tight decision" had to be made between him and Bayer Leverkusen winger Brandt for Germany's World Cup contingent.

"I can't explain that. For me there is no photo finish. I can't see it," Ballack told British media.

"There's 23 players in the



squad, to say you only see him in the position Julian Brandt is playing – you have to have a fantasy to believe that. "Brandt is a good, talented player... But he didn't play on the level that Leroy Sane played. Sane was at a bigger club, with bigger expectations, with better players. Nothing against Julian Brandt, but I can't explain why Loew compared the two." Holders Germany kick-off their World Cup campaign against Mexico in Group F on June 17. Sweden and South Korea are the other teams in the group.

SETBACK
Russia drop to World Cup low in FIFA rankings

Hosts Russia will begin next week's World Cup as the lowest-ranked of the 32 teams participating in the tournament, according to FIFA's latest world rankings announced yesterday. Russia, who suffered a 1-0 loss to Austria in a friendly last month, slipped four places to 70th in the standings, behind Saudi Arabia at 67th. The two lowest-ranked teams will kick off the World Cup at Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow on June 14. World Cup holders Germany stay top after the latest round of international fixtures while the rest of the top seven remained unchanged from May's rankings. Poland's recent form has helped them climb into eighth position at the expense of Spain, who have dropped to 10th.

SHOCKER
'We were robbed!' Panama team hotel raided

At around the time that World Cup minnows Panama were playing Norway this week, thieves were busy rifling their Oslo hotel rooms, police told AFP yesterday. The Panamanian football federation tweeted: "Three #Panamayor hotel rooms were robbed in Oslo, Norway. Norwegian police are at the scene looking for clues." Police say objects worth around 53,000 euros (\$62,000) were taken from three rooms in a downtown Oslo hotel, explaining thieves are thought to have used an old magnetic room key or a stolen one and that video footage would be examined. Police spokeswoman said the robbery probably took place at the same time as Panama were being beaten by Norway on Wednesday.

RECOGNITION
Lewandowski voted Best Player in Bundesliga

Bayern Munich striker Robert Lewandowski was named best player of the Bundesliga season in a poll by the German union of professional footballers (VDV). The Polish attacker got 27.7 percent of the vote to rank ahead of his Munich teammate James Rodriguez (13.8 percent) and Schalke defender Naldo (8 percent), VDV said. Outgoing Bayern coach Jupp Heynckes was also voted best coach with 36.7 percent of the vote, followed by Schalke's Domenico Tedesco (25 percent) and Munich-bound Niko Kovac (18.1 percent) from cup winners Eintracht Frankfurt. Bayer Leverkusen's Leon Bailey was the best newcomer in the annual poll among active football professionals.

MOVE
Rangers to sign Liverpool's Ejaria on loan: report

Scottish club Rangers are close to completing a season-long loan deal for Liverpool's Ovie Ejaria, according to reports. The 20-year-old midfielder is known to new Rangers boss Steven Gerrard, who was in charge of Liverpool's academy prior to his move to Scotland. Ejaria has made eight senior appearances for the Merseyside club but spent the second half of last season on loan at Sunderland. If the deal goes through, he will be Gerrard's fourth signing, after Burnley midfielder Scott Arfield, Hull City goalkeeper Allan McGregor and Brighton winger Jamie Murphy. Ejaria, who won the FIFA under-20 World Cup in South Korea in 2017, scored one goal in 11 appearances for Sunderland.

SCANDAL
Ghana execs caught on video allegedly taking bribes

An explosive documentary has rocked Ghana's football association, showing executives including the organisation's head allegedly proposing bribes worth millions of euros. Ghana Football Association president Kwesi Nyantakyi was caught suggesting lucrative deals to undercover journalists posing as "investors" in the film *Number 12*. Other Ghana FA executives were also filmed accepting bribes influencing player selection for various national teams. And 15 referees were even caught on camera allegedly accepting just \$100 to rig Ghana Premier League matches – with their assistants taking \$50. The project is the result of two years work by an undercover investigative journalist who goes by the pseudonym Anas Aremeyaw Anas.

FOCUS **SPOTLIGHT**

WC stadiums must not turn into flea markets: Putin

Russia has spent at least \$4bn either building or refurbishing 12 arenas in 11 cities

AFP
Moscow

President Vladimir Putin firmly told regional leaders yesterday not to turn World Cup arenas into flea markets once the football showpiece wraps up next month.

Space around stadiums such as Moscow's Luzhniki became bustling hubs that sold everything from fruit to clothes during Russia's post-Soviet economic crisis in the 1990s.

The money helped pay for the land – but also fed unregulated and crime-driven trade.

The authorities tore them down once growth picked up and Moscow acquired Western-style shopping centres.

The one in Luzhniki only closed its doors in 2011.

Putin told an annual televised phone-in that the World Cup kicking off next Thursday must leave a lasting sports legacy in which the new arenas play an integral part.

"I want to address colleagues from the regions – no matter what, you cannot allow these venues to suddenly turn into some sort of markets like those in the mid 1990s," Putin said.

"That is categorically inadmissible."

Russia has spent at least \$4bn (3.4bn euros) either building or refurbishing 12 arenas in 11 host cities for the month-long celebration of the world's most popular sport.

FIFA boss Gianni Infantino said in a statement issued by the world football governing body on Wednesday that Russia was "100% ready" as hosts.

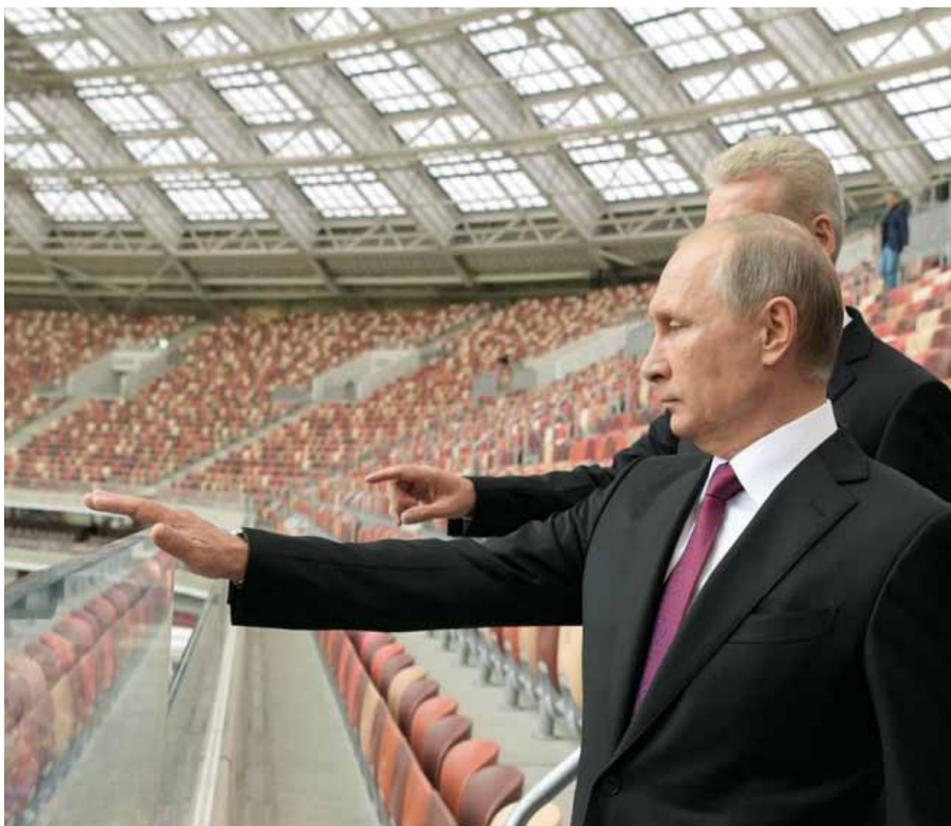
"The whole world will see what a hospitable country Russia is, how well everything is organised," said Infantino.

But the World Cup's entire budget adds up to more than \$13bn and FIFA is keen to see the investment pay dividends for Russia that make other nations want to stage future tournaments.

The question of what happens to the huge arenas after the July 15 final has been hounding Russia since it won the hosting rights over England in 2010.

Host city Sochi did not even have a football club until a second division side was moved there this week.

Others are home to teams that have not



In this September 9, 2017, picture, Russian President Vladimir Putin listens to Moscow's Mayor Sergei Sobyanin as they inspect the Luzhniki Stadium, which will host matches of the 2018 FIFA World Cup, in Moscow. (Reuters)

played top flight football for years and draw just a few thousand people on the best of days.

The head of Russia's Premier League has also questioned why organisers decided against fitting the arenas with roofs that make watching games more inviting for fans in colder northern cities.

'CHILDREN'S SPORT'

"We spent a lot of money and we need

to make sure that all this infrastructure works first and foremost for the development of sport," said Putin.

"And it has to be popular sport, children's sport. We have to create children's and youth teams, leagues and organised competitions."

Putin also stressed that the stadiums have to become "self-sufficient".

Russia had earlier earmarked \$190m to help pay for the their operations over

the coming five years.

Putin's plan for using as little of that money as possible included using the space inside the arenas for retail.

"A modern stadium is not just a football pitch," he said.

"You can put anything you want there. You can install stores, cafes, restaurants... and special gyms," said Putin.

"Much will depend on regional leaders."

Brazil still to gel ahead of World Cup, says Pele

Reuters
Sao Paulo

Brazil may be five-time winners of the World Cup and joint favourites to make it six in Russia this year but the South Americans do not yet have the right blend for success, three-time World Cup winner Pele said on Wednesday.

Brazil have lost once in 20 games since coach Tite took over almost two years ago but he has been forced to chop and change his side in recent friendlies due to injuries.

"I have the utmost confidence in Tite's ability," Pele told Reuters.

"My worry is about one thing; there are only a few days until the World Cup starts and we still don't have the right team. Individually all the players are very good. But we're not a team."

Talismanic forward Neymar injured a foot and ankle in February and full back Dani Alves dropped out the squad due to a knee injury. Renato Augusto and Douglas Costa picked up strains that kept them out of Sunday's 2-0 win over Croatia.

Neymar returned at halftime in that match to lead Brazil to victory and Pele, the only player to have won the World Cup three times, said the Paris St Germain



striker was capable of inspiring Brazil to the title in Russia.

"Neymar is to me one of the best players in the world," Pele said. "Today he is more mature and he has more experience but he isn't going to win the World Cup on his own. It's teams that win the World Cup."

"The greatest Brazil team of all-time was the one in 1970, with Tostao, Rivellino, Gerson and Pele all wearing the number 10 shirts for their clubs. In the 1970 World Cup we spent more than six months together. That's why it worked."

Brazil have played only three friendlies this year and face one final warm-up match on Sunday against Austria in Vienna.

They kick off their World Cup campaign against Switzerland on June 17, before facing Costa Rica and Serbia in Group E.



Brazil's striker Neymar (second from right) sits with teammates as they listen to Brazil's head coach Tite (centre) during a team training session in north-east London on Tuesday. (AFP)

Royal visit



Britain's Prince William, Duke of Cambridge (centre), President of the Football Association, shakes hands with England's striker Harry Kane (left) as England's manager Gareth Southgate looks on at the England football training base near Leeds in England, yesterday. (AFP)

ANALYSIS

Europe's 'big five' continue to flex financial muscle

DPA
London

European football continues to flex its financial muscle as the continent's top five leagues posted record revenues for the 2016-17 season.

Analysis from professional service company Deloitte released yesterday showed clubs in the top divisions in England, Spain, Germany, Italy and France had combined revenues of 14.7bn euros (17.3bn dollars), a 9 percent increase over the previous year.

"The 2016/17 season saw a continuation of the trend of polarisation within the European football market, with the 'big five' leagues and the UEFA Champions League growing at a rate unmatched by other leagues," Deloitte said in its 27th Annual Review of Football Finance.

The total revenue of 25.5bn euros for all European clubs, a 4 percent increase from 2016, was led by the Premier

League.

Bolstered by a three-year, 5.1bn pounds (6.9bn dollars) TV deal signed in 2015, Premier League top the list at 5.3bn euros.

"The financial results for the 2016-17 season fully affirmed the English Premier League's position as the market leader as every one of the 20 clubs set their own personal annual revenue record," Deloitte's Dan Jones said.

"It is a far cry from a decade ago when 60 per cent of the Premier League's clubs were making operating losses and the vast majority of any revenue increases were being paid out in wages, prompting concerns over long-term financial sustainability."

Spain's La Liga (2.9bn euros) moved into second above the German Bundesliga (2.8bn euros), which remains Europe's best-attended league with average crowds of more than 44,000.

The Italian Serie A (2.1bn euros) and France's Ligue 1 (1.6bn euros) round of the top five.



FOCUS

Bend it like Einstein: Science and the World Cup

In other words, it is expected that a set-piece situation such as a free kick or corner kick, or an intermediate-range strong shot, may be effective

AFP
Paris

Football fans won't be alone when they sit glued to their TV sets for the 2018 World Cup.

Scientists, too, will follow every move of the players and ball, probing all facets of the beautiful game for insights into disciplines as divergent as aerodynamics, psychology and the human physique.

On the ball

With just about every World Cup, there seems to be grumbling about the ball, which Adidas has designed for the four-yearly FIFA tournament since 1970. Already, this year's offering, Telstar 18, has been criticised by some goalkeepers for being too flighty and hard to grip. But scientists say the new sphere is actually quite stable – certainly more so than Jabulani, the much-denigrated official ball for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

The Telstar 18 is a nostalgic nod to Adidas' first-ever World Cup ball, the Telstar, used in Mexico for the 1970 World Cup.

That was the first black-and-white sphere made for a World Cup – designed for better visibility on monochrome TV screens – and sported the mix of pentagonal and hexagonal panels that has become synonymous with soccer balls. The latest offering is white, black and grey, with gold lettering.

Eric Goff, a physics professor at the University of Lynchburg in Virginia, was part of a team that analysed the ball using wind-tunnel experiments and surface measurements. Compared to the Brazuca, its predecessor used in Brazil in 2014, the Telstar 18 experiences more "drag" or resistance as it flies through the air, the researchers found.

This means it will travel shorter distances – about eight to ten percent less than Brazuca – when kicked at high impact speeds of more than 90 kilometres (56 miles) per hour, Goff told AFP. "That could be bad for strikers who kick from a great distance and must therefore kick the ball very hard," he explained. But potentially good news for goalies, as it means balls kicked at high speed "will reach the goal a little slower than Brazuca did in 2014."

Like Brazuca, Telstar 18 has six panels, compared to Jabulani's eight – far fewer than the traditional 32-panel recipe long followed. But Telstar 18's panels are shaped differently, and the seam that holds them together is 30 percent longer in total than Brazuca's, though also narrower and more shallow.

Sungchan Hong of the Univer-



In this file photo taken on May 9, 2018 an 'Adidas Telstar 18' football of German sporting goods firm Adidas, the official ball for the 2018 FIFA Football World Cup, is pictured on the sidelines of the company's annual general meeting in Fuerth, southern Germany. (AFP)

sity of Tsukuba's sports science faculty in Japan, said kicking robot tests revealed the Telstar 18 has "a very stable trajectory compared to the previous balls."

"In other words, it is expected that a set-piece situation such as a free kick or corner kick, or an intermediate-range strong shot, may be effective," he told AFP. "I don't think there will be as many irregular moves" as with Jabulani, added Hong. "I don't think there will be any disadvantage to the goalkeeper."

Compared to Jabulani, the Telstar 18 should display much less of the "knuckleball" effect that makes balls launched with no surface spin start zig-zagging wildly in flight.

Seeing red

A winning formula requires not only the best players, coaches, and a good combination of skill and luck. A team's kit, research has shown, can give it an edge.

Particularly if it's red.

Iain Greenlees, a sports psychologist with the University of Chichester in England, has co-authored research papers concluding that both penalty takers

and goalkeepers benefit from being decked out in ruby regalia.

The studies suggest that players in red jerseys are viewed as more dominant and skilled – both by themselves and by opponents who may be more anxious and perform less well as a result. One theory, Greenlees told AFP, is that humans have evolved to associate red with danger, being the colour of blood, or with aggression – think of a face reddened in anger.

"An alternative explanation is that we have simply learnt from a very young age that red is associated with danger (warning signs are red) and failure (teachers may mark with a red pen)," he said. And then there is the hypothesis that red is more visible and draws an opponent's attention, breaking their focus.

There is certainly anecdotal evidence for scarlet success.

The English football team, which traditionally plays home games in white, won its only World Cup title in its red "away" kit at Wembley Stadium in 1966 against white-shirted West Germany. Some of the country's top football clubs – Liverpool and Manchester United for example

– play in red. But this does not explain the phenomenon that is Brazil – holder of the most World Cup titles with its iconic yellow jersey. And the defending champions, Germany, wear white. One study found that white kits are the most visible on a green football field, and could "increase the amount of completed successful passes".

Green, however, could boost a team's defence, being harder for opponents to see against a green background. Greenlees points out that the overall impact of any colour would be small.

"A good team wearing white/blue/green should still outperform an average team wearing red," he said. But if teams are equally matched in other departments, jersey shade may just tip the scales.

Surprise!

Pele had it. Messi has it. So does Ronaldo and Neymar.

The flamboyance, that element of skilful surprise that can change a match from one second to the next and fires up the fans.

The over-the-head bicycle kick made famous by Pele, no-look or dummy passes, the

"elastic" dribble that makes a defender believe the ball is coming right at them only for it to be pulled back... these are tricks designed not only to entertain the hoards.

"High creativity" is, in fact, a good predictor for victory, said a study in the *Journal of Sports Sciences* in April. Researchers analysed all 311 goals scored during open play in 153 matches in the 2010 and 2014 World Cups and the 2016 UEFA Euro.

They looked specifically at the eight actions before each goal, and rated them from zero to 10 for creativity, described as a combination of "surprising, original and flexible" ball use. High creativity in the last two actions before the shot on goal "proved to be the best predictor for game success," they found.

The study found that highly creative moves were rare during matches – fewer than one in 10. But almost half of goals scored included one or more highly creative actions. "Tactical creativity seems to be a crucial factor for team success," said the researchers, meaning it was important in selecting players, and should be "increased via training".

IMAGE

Salah's Iraqi lookalike dreams of glory

AFP
Baghdad

With his black beard, curly hair and football shirt, Iraqi striker Hussein Ali is often mistaken for one of the world's top players: Egypt's Mohamed Salah.

In the Iraqi capital Baghdad, 20-year-old Ali is frequently stopped in his working-class Hurriya neighbourhood by people wanting a photograph with their idol.

Although he is himself a striker, for the Al-Zawraa club, it is Ali's likeness to Salah which piques Iraqis' interest.

"At the first training session, he introduced himself as 'Hussein Ali! I replied, 'No, no, you are Mohamed Salah,' said Ali's coach Adnan Mohamed.

Back when Salah was playing for AS Roma, Ali was aware of the resemblance but took the comments as "a joke".

But when the Egyptian shot to global fame in the Premier League – becoming "the number one footballer for all Arabs" according to Ali – his Iraqi doppelganger started to seriously work on his image.

Since then, he has started wearing the red shirt of Salah's club Liverpool.

"It's the real shirt, bought from an official supplier," he said proudly from his small house, where the shutters are closed against the Baghdad heat during the long hours of electricity cuts.

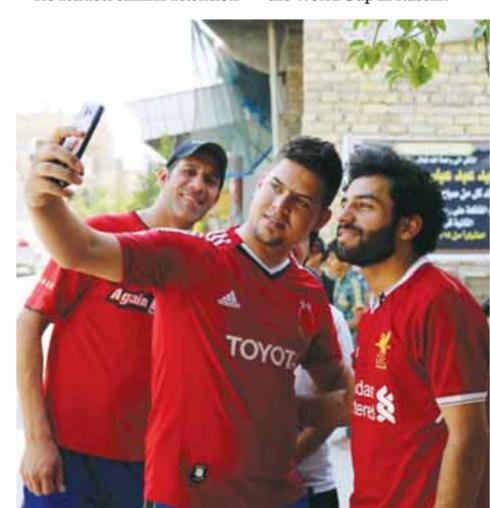
Centre of attention

Ali said he paid \$40 for the shirt, which he takes carefully from its hanger, while working every day to support his large family and without a wage from playing football.

Lately, the "Mohamed Salah of Iraq" can't leave his house without being stopped for photographs or approached by football fans who mistake him for the Egyptian star.

"The day before yesterday I was in a mall; the security guards, the shop workers and the clients, everyone wanted to take a photo with me... even the girls!" said Ali.

He attracts similar attention



A fan takes a selfie with Iraqi footballer Hussein Ali, who plays for the Iraqi Al-Zawraa FC and is a lookalike of Liverpool's Egyptian forward Mohamed Salah, in Baghdad. (AFP)

SPOTLIGHT

What sort of welcome will visitors get in Russia?

AFP
Moscow

World Cup organisers say the competition will draw more than one million fans to Russia, creating challenges that range from the logistical to the cultural for the hosts and their guests.

One million expected

There won't be an "Oranje" army in Russia, because the Dutch failed to qualify, but there will still be the clapping Icelanders, the chanting English and the distinctive personalities of the supporters of the other 29 visiting countries.

The differing languages, songs, flags and fan cultures of the world will enliven the streets of Russia's host cities until the middle of July.

The figure of one million seems to have been reached by a surprisingly unscientific manner. FIFA has deducted the number of tickets sold to Russians, 872,578, from the two million it says have been sold in total.

The biggest demand, outside the host nation, has come from the United States, whose team failed to qualify, with 86,710 sold. Then comes Brazil (71,787), Colombia (64,231) and Germany (60,457). The English are not even in the top ten.

Russia's objective, organising committee chief Alexei Sorokin said, is to show fans "an unforgettable, colourful Russia."

\$13 billion in infrastructure

Russia has spent a whopping \$13 billion (11 billion euros) on infrastructure.

"The airports in six cities have new terminals, 21 new ho-

tels have been built in host cities," Sorokin said in May, adding that "14 hospitals have been re-equipped for the tournament."

"Nothing is superfluous," he said. "We needed them." "This fulfils a regional planning objective which is in effect catching up on the lack of investment over the last 20 years," said Jean-Baptiste Guegan, one of the authors of a book investigating Russian football.

He added that the goal was also to present a "radiant and attractive" image and give visitors the best possible experience so they would go home and recommend Russia as a tourist destination.

Free transport and Fan ID

FIFA president Gianni Infantino told AFP this week that "I have never seen a country that has done so much to welcome the fans." They will certainly be



able to get between the host cities on trains, although in reality the vast majority who benefit will be Russian nationals. Sorokin said 700 additional trains would be laid on.

"It's a good system but what they are offering is insufficient and the vast majority of trains are already reserved," said Ronan

Evain, head of Football Supporters Europe (FSE), an umbrella organisation of supporters in 40 countries.

Accommodation concerns

This could be a concern because some owners of apartments in host cities have sharply increased their prices.

Some owners have cancelled bookings, and are now demanding higher prices than they originally advertised.

Many fans complained of similar tactics in the Ukrainian capital Kiev in May when Liverpool played Real Madrid in the Champions League final.

Evain said: "In Moscow, things are starting to balance out because there is an enormous choice of accommodation, but in cities which are not as used to having tourist visitors, like Saransk and Nizhny Novgorod, prices are shooting up."

Language barrier and human rights

The question of how foreign visitors will be received in Russia remains to be seen.

"A lot has been done to train volunteers and the security forces to avoid racism," said Sylvia Schenk, of Transparency International who also sits on a FIFA committee on human rights.

But in a country where black footballers are still occasionally subjected to monkey chants, there is an obvious risk of racist incidents.

A 2013 law in Russia makes homosexual "propaganda" a criminal offence if it is distributed to young people. FIFA has succeeded in negotiating with Russian authorities so that the rainbow flag, the symbol of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender pride, can be displayed in stadiums during the tournament.

"The rainbow flag will be allowed in stadiums for example. Is it solving all the issues of Russia with gay people? No, but it is a step," Infantino told AFP.

Schenk, from Transparency International, said: "There will also be a 'House of Pride' in Moscow run by Russia NGOs and FIFA, and the authorities have confirmed that no-one will be prosecuted."

In terms of the training of volunteers, "many have not been given any training in English", Evain from the Football Supporters Europe (FSE) group said.

"It won't necessarily be a problem unless there is a problem like an illness or a specific request from an elderly supporter, for example, bearing in mind that security measures mean spectators might have to walk several kilometres to the stadium."

NBA

Durant's heroics power Warriors to brink of crown

Cavaliers face an uphill task as no team has ever recovered from a 3-0 deficit to win an NBA playoff series

AFP
Cleveland

Defending champion Golden State, powered by 43 points from Kevin Durant, moved to the brink of a third NBA title in four seasons yesterday by defeating the Cleveland Cavaliers 110-102. The Warriors seized a commanding 3-0 lead in the best-of-seven NBA Finals and by winning game four today would complete the first championship series sweep since Cleveland was blanked by San Antonio in 2007.

"I don't want to downplay anything but I don't want to act like this is the end of the road," Durant said. "We did some things that we need to correct if we want to win the next game. I've just got stay locked in."

No team has ever recovered from a 3-0 deficit to win an NBA playoff series, but the Cavaliers made the top comeback in NBA Finals history in 2016 from 3-1 down to swipe a title from Golden State. "It's a tough loss," said Cavaliers star LeBron James. "We had our chances. But we have another opportunity on Friday to extend the series but we've got to come out and play 48 minutes."

Durant added 12 rebounds and seven assists to his top playoff scoring total, but it was not until his 3-pointer with 49 seconds remaining to give the Warriors a 106-100 lead that Cleveland's fate was sealed. "That was amazing what he did out there," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "Some of those shots, I don't think anybody in the world but him could have made those shots. He was incredible."

Durant's last basket was eerily like a 3-pointer he made late in game three last year against the Cavs that clinched a Golden State victory. "He's definitely an assassin and that was one of those assassin plays right there," James said. "It was like deja vu seeing that shot again," Cavaliers forward Kevin Love said. It was another dagger in the title hopes of James, who had 33 points, 10 rebounds and 11 assists while Kevin Love added 20 points and 13 rebounds for the Cavaliers. "It was a big shot," Cavaliers coach Tyrone Lue said. "He was four or five feet behind the (3-point) line and he raised up and made a big shot for them. So, you know, kind of like he did last year."

The Cavaliers had been 8-1 at home in the playoffs with eight wins in a row since losing their first-round opener to Indiana. "We feel like we've been right there," Love said. "We just have to come out Friday and not give in."



Kevin Durant (right) of the Golden State Warriors attempts a jumper over Jeff Green of the Cleveland Cavaliers during the Game Three of the 2018 NBA Finals in Cleveland, Ohio, on Wednesday night. (AFP)

But the Warriors improved to 10-2 against the Cavaliers since Durant joined Golden State before last season. "His overall game was ridiculous — the passing, the rebounding, the scoring," Kerr said. "It wasn't just the number of points. It seemed like every time we needed a bucket he got it for us."

James landed badly going for a re-

bound early in the second quarter and limped on his right ankle, but the four-time NBA Most Valuable Player kept the Cavaliers in contention to the end. "I twisted it pretty good," James said. "But I'll be in the lineup on Friday."

Durant scored nine points in a 15-8 run to close the second quarter that pulled Golden State within 58-52 at

half-time after trailing by as many as 13 points. "Kevin was the story in the first half just keeping us in the game," Kerr said. "And then he was the story in the second half as well, closing it out."

JaVale McGee scored six points and Durant added five in a 15-3 Golden State run early in the third quarter that produced the Warriors' first lead and

saw it grow to a team-best 69-64. The Cavaliers battled into the final seconds but Stephen Curry, who missed 13 of his first 14 shots, connected on a layup and 3-pointer back-to-back to give Golden State the lead for good. "As usual he hit a big one," Kerr said. "He always finds a way to make big plays even on his toughest nights."

Curry had 11 points while McGee, Draymond Green, Klay Thompson and Jordan Ball all had 10. Warriors forward Andre Iguodala, the 2015 NBA Finals MVP, returned to Golden State's lineup after being sidelined by a left leg bone bruise. He suffered a bruised right leg in the second quarter but returned in the fourth quarter.

BASEBALL

Cubs' Heyward hits walk-off slam in win over Phillies

Reuters
Chicago

Jason Heyward hit a game-winning grand slam with two outs and two strikes in the bottom of the ninth inning, lifting the Chicago Cubs to a 7-5 win over the Philadelphia Phillies on Wednesday night at Wrigley Field. Teammates mobbed Heyward near home plate after the towering, walk-off blast, which marked his third career grand slam. He drilled a high fastball into the right field bleachers to even the series at one game apiece. Anthony Rizzo also homered for Chicago.

The Cubs trailed by two runs before loading the bases in the ninth to set up Heyward's heroics. The blast spoiled a milestone night for Phillies rookie Dylan Cozens, who hit his first career homer, a tiebreaking, two-run shot in the top of the ninth to give the Phillies a 5-3 lead. The homer came in the sixth career at-bat for the 24-year-old.

YANKEES 3, BLUE JAYS 0
Aaron Judge hit a two-run home run in the 13th inning, and Giancarlo Stanton added a solo blast to give New York a victory at Toronto and a sweep of the two-game series. Judge's 17th homer of the season came against Joe Biagini (0-5), who had allowed a one-out single to Brett Gardner. Stanton hit his 13th homer of the season with two outs. David Robertson (4-2) pitched a perfect 12th with two strikeouts to earn the win. Aroldis Chapman

pitched around a double by Kendrys Morales — Toronto's fourth hit of the game — in the bottom of the 13th to notch his 15th save of the season.

ANGELS 4, ROYALS 3
Ian Kinsler and Justin Upton hit home runs, and Los Angeles survived the early departure of starting pitcher Shohei Ohtani in a win over Kansas City at Anaheim, California. Ohtani gave up one run on four hits and three walks while making 63 pitches in four innings before leaving due to a blister on his right middle finger. He was also forced out of an April 17 start because of a blister on the same finger. Kinsler's two-run homer in the sixth inning broke a 1-1 tie, and Upton added a solo shot in the seventh.

GIANTS 5, DIAMONDBACKS 4
Brandon Crawford followed Andrew McCutchen's two-out double with a walk-off single in the 10th inning, capping a rally that gave host San Francisco a victory over Arizona. Pinch hitter Alen Hanson's two-out, two-run homer in the bottom of the ninth off Diamondbacks closer Brad Boxberger tied the game at 4-4 and prompted extra innings.

McCutchen's double, his second of the game, came after Andrew Chafin (0-2) retired the first two batters he faced in the last of the 10th. With first base open, Crawford worked a full count before coming through with his game-winner to right field.

NATIONALS 11, RAYS 2
Tanner Roark threw six solid in-



Chicago Cubs right fielder Jason Heyward celebrates after scoring a game-winning grand slam home against the Philadelphia Phillies in the ninth inning at Wrigley Field on Wednesday. (USA TODAY Sports)

nings and drove in two runs as host Washington jumped out to a big early lead in a rout of Tampa Bay. Roark allowed two runs on six hits with four strikeouts and a walk in six innings.

He hit a two-run single in the first inning to combine with Anthony Rendon (4-for-5, four runs, three RBIs) and Michael A. Taylor (3-for-5, three RBIs) to

produce most of the Nationals' offense. The Rays tried to go with their bullpen starter experiment again as Jonny Venters (1-1) got his first major league start after being a career reliever.

Venters lasted six batters and gave up five runs on three hits before Ryan Yarbrough took over. Tampa Bay's losing streak stands at six games.

ORIOLES 1, METS 0

Dylan Bundy tossed seven scoreless innings as Baltimore beat reeling host New York to sweep a two-game series. Manny Machado's sacrifice fly in the top of the eighth put Bundy in line for the win and gave the Orioles, who have the worst record in baseball, consecutive victories for just the fourth time this season. The

Mets fell to 0-6 on a nine-game homestand that concludes this weekend against the New York Yankees. The Mets have scored just seven runs in the six games and only two runs in the last four.

RED SOX 7, TIGERS 1

Eduardo Rodriguez pitched 5 2/3 innings of one-run ball, Andrew Benintendi and Christian Vazquez each knocked solo home runs, and host Boston beat Detroit for its four straight victory. Rodriguez (7-1) gave up five hits, walked one and struck out five.

Benintendi, Vazquez and Xander Bogaerts (3-for-4) all finished with a pair of RBIs as the Red Sox improved their record to a major-league-leading 43-19. Jose Iglesias hit an RBI single for the Tigers, who have dropped their four of five. Detroit starter Blaine Hardy (2-1) allowed five runs on eight hits with no walks and two strikeouts in six innings.

PIRATES 11, DODGERS 9

Josh Harrison was 2-for-3 with three RBIs, and Corey Dickerson was 3-for-4 with four runs as Pittsburgh halted a three-game losing streak in a slugfest over visiting Los Angeles. Pittsburgh, which had been shut out in two games in a row, had 10 hits and drew 10 walks. Matt Kemp went 3-for-5 with five RBIs, including a three-run homer, to pace the Dodgers, who had their four-game winning streak broken.

RANGERS 8, A'S 2

Jurickson Profar homered twice and knocked in five runs as Texas routed visiting Oakland. Joey

Gallo and Ronald Guzman also went deep for the Rangers, who homered nine times in sweeping the two-game series from the A's.

Texas' first 13 runs of the series scored exclusively on homers before Profar knocked in two with a single in the seventh inning. Bartolo Colon (3-3) made his way through five innings to pick up his 243rd career win, permitting two runs on six hits. Colon earned his 243rd career win, tying him with Hall of Famer Juan Marichal for the most by a Dominican pitcher.

ASTROS 7, MARINERS 5

Yuli Gurriel extended his hitting streak to 12 games with a two-run single that capped a turnaround four-run seventh inning as host Houston rallied to a victory over Seattle. The Astros capped their six-game homestand 3-3 and a 13-game stretch against stiff competition with a 6-7 mark.

The Mariners had their five-game winning streak snapped despite rallying to the lead in the top of the seventh against Houston starter Lance McCullers. Evan Gattis hit a two-run homer for Houston. Seattle got homers from Nelson Cruz, Denard Span and Kyle Seager.

MARLINS 11, CARDINALS 3

Derek Dietrich drove in three runs and Lewis Brinson homered twice as Miami rolled to a win at St. Louis. Dietrich went 4-for-5, including a two-run homer, as part of Miami's season-high, 17-hit attack. Starlin Castro went 4-for-6 with three doubles, and JT Realmuto went 3-for-4 with a triple and two doubles.

RUGBY

Astonishing rise of first black Springbok captain

Since the age of eight, Kolisi had a firm understanding of the game thanks to his father Fezakele, who played centre for the local team

AFP
Johannesburg

South Africa's first black Test rugby captain, Siyamthanda 'Siya' Kolisi, had a tough childhood much like the millions of poor black children in the coastal Eastern Cape province. And his astonishing rise to the top will inspire millions of young aspiring players for years to come, rugby analysts say.

Born to teenage parents, Siya was the eldest of three children. He was raised in Zwide township near Port Elizabeth by a grandmother who took odd jobs as a domestic worker wherever she could to provide for the family.

"My mom was too young to raise me," loose forward Kolisi said ahead of his debut as captain tomorrow against England at Ellis Park in Johannesburg. "I grew up in a very difficult (environment) — not the worst but it was difficult for me going to school and everything."

The cruel, jarring conditions of the township meant it was difficult for the little boy to even dream of making it as a provincial rugby player, let alone captaining the Springboks, a team traditionally dominated by white players. "When you are in the township, you just don't dream like that."

Although financially poor, the household's love of rugby was abundant. Since the age of eight, Kolisi had a firm understanding of the game thanks to his father Fezakele, who played centre for the local team. Kolisi played rugby for his school with great passion, despite poor equipment and infrastructure.

"I see something in you." Those were the words of veteran coach Eric Songwqi that catapulted Kolisi's career. The coach recalls the moment vividly. Songwqi's school had just thrashed Kolisi's team 50-0, but the coach spotted the fire and raw talent of Siya and approached him. "That, for me, was the biggest moment in my life."

Kolisi grabbed the opportunity with both hands and left his school in the

middle of the year to participate in provincial trials. "I'll never forget those trials because I was playing in silk boxers because I didn't have shorts."

At the age of 12, he made the B team and was spotted by Andrew Hayidakis, who enticed him with a full rugby scholarship to attend Grey High School. "Coming from the township, not having a lot and coming to Grey, your dreams start becoming much bigger because you have everything you need to be whatever you want to be. I started dreaming big," recalled Kolisi.

He later went on to play for the school first team, then rose to represent regional teams like the Eastern Province Kings. In 2012 he made his debut for Cape Town-based Super Rugby side Western Stormers and was named captain last year.

The 26-year-old has worked hard to bring his big dreams to life, both on and off the field. He married the love of his life Rachel Smith in 2016. In the four years leading up to tying the knot, the couple adopted his two half-siblings and had a child of their own.

However, the mixed-race couple have had to deal with racial slurs and insults from the public on both sides of the divide in a country with a troubled racial past. One critic on social media referred to Rachel as "a waste of good genes" because she married a black.

While South Africa has been a democratic, multi-racial society since 1994, racial tensions have spilled into the post-apartheid era and remain strong. But no one was more thrilled when Siya was named captain than his wife. "When I told my wife she put the phone down on me. But she called me back and asked me to repeat what I was saying," Kolisi said. "Obviously, it was before it was announced, but she was so happy that she wanted to tell people."

South African editor Pieter du Toit wrote: "He (Siya) will also represent generations of men who were denied the opportunity to don the old green jersey." Kolisi will bring a sense of healing to a sport and nation scarred by racial inequality and social injustices.



South Africa's first black Test rugby captain, Siyamthanda 'Siya' Kolisi, had a tough childhood much like the millions of poor black children in the coastal Eastern Cape province. And his astonishing rise to the top will inspire youngsters. (AFP)

BOXING

Golovkin stripped of middleweight IBF title

Reuters
London

The International Boxing Federation (IBF) has stripped Gennady Golovkin of his middleweight title after he failed to set up a mandatory defence against Ukrainian Sergiy Derievychenko. Golovkin was scheduled for a rematch against his WBC mandatory challenger Saul 'Canelo' Alvarez on May 5 but the Mexican withdrew from the fight after being suspended by the Nevada State Athletic Commission in April.

Golovkin, who had held the IBF title since October 2015, defended his WBA, WBC and IBO belts against Vanes Martirosyan instead in a fight that was not sanctioned by the IBF.

The IBF's mandatory challenger bout was next in the rotation and the organisation ruled in a meeting on May 22 that Golovkin had until June 6 to agree fight terms with Derevyanchenko.

"After a lengthy review and period of deliberation, the International Boxing Federation has vacated the IBF Middleweight title held by Gennady Golovkin," the IBF said in a statement on Wednesday.

"The IBF had to enforce the penalty under Rule 5H for Golovkin having participated in an unsanctioned contest within his weight class and declare the IBF Middleweight title vacant.

"The IBF will identify the two leading available contenders and order them to negotiate to fight for the vacant title."



FOCUS

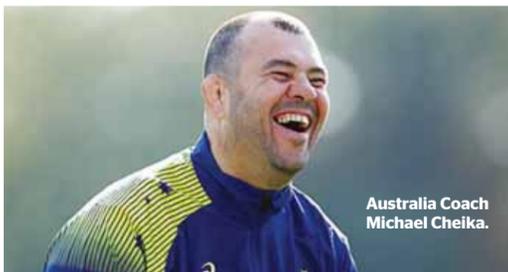
Wallabies bulk up for Six Nations champs Ireland

AFP
Brisbane, Australia

Coach Michael Cheika has shown his hand by picking a forwards-dominated Wallabies squad to take on Six Nations champions Ireland in the first of three Tests in Brisbane tomorrow. Cheika, who coached Leinster to their first-ever European Cup in 2009, knows well the challenges of playing the Irish — currently ranked second in the world and unbeaten in their last 12 internationals.

The Wallabies mentor has gone with a physical approach to tame them, backed up by the attacking potency of Will Genia, Bernard Foley, Kurtley Beale and Israel Folau. He has called up Queensland Reds duo, hooker Brandon Paenga-Amosa and No.8 Caleb Timu, to make their international debuts and has gone with a six-two forwards-backs bench, featuring another potential debutant in backrower Pete Samu.

The Irish, who haven't won a Test in Australia since 1979, are an attritional combination, playing patient buildup rugby and probing for weaknesses with their pinpoint kicking game. The Wallabies might have their best chance of an upset in the opening game of the series with Ireland starting without six players from the Grand Slam side that downed England at Twickenham in March. Irish coach Joe Schmidt left out Johnny Sexton, Garry Ringrose, Dan Leavy, Cian Healy and Tadhg Furlong from his starting side along with injured captain Rory Best following Leinster's successful European and Pro 14 campaigns.



Australia Coach Michael Cheika.

Sexton, who looms as the danger man for the Wallabies in this series having recently steered Leinster to a record-equalling fourth European Champions Cup, was named among the reserves for tomorrow's Test.

"They heavily rely on his kicking game," Wallabies playmaker Kurtley Beale told reporters. "He's their main creator in the team. Whenever they do have ball in hand, a lot of the time he is their go-to guy to release pressure by putting balls in the corner. That's something we're very aware of but he certainly plays a dominant role with the way they play with ball in hand and certainly the way they exit their own half."

Munster-bound Joey Carbery, who has only started in two of his previous 10 caps — against the United States and Fiji — got the nod ahead of Sexton for the first Test alongside Conor Murray. Murray is determined that Ireland build on their Six Nations win earlier this year.

"This group, the success that we had the last time we were together was fantastic, we've all been aiming for that for quite a while but we all want to finish this season on a high and we're all

really competitive," Murray said. "It's a challenge to come here against one of the big-dog teams and put down a marker and to get a result down here is something everyone in our group wants to do. It's a really competitive environment and I think we're really good at that, just moving on and looking at the next target, our next challenge."

TEAMS (15-1)

Australia — Israel Folau; Marika Koroibete, Samu Kerevi, Kurtley Beale, Dane Haylett-Petty; Bernard Foley, Will Genia; Caleb Timu, Michael Hooper (capt), David Pocock; Adam Coleman, Izack Rodda; Sekope Kepu, Brandon Paenga-Amosa, Scott Sio.

Reserves: Tolu Latu, Allan Aalalatoa, Taniela Tupou, Rob Simmons, Lukhan Tui, Pete Samu, Nick Phipps, Reece Hodge.

Ireland — Rob Kearney; Keith Earls, Robbie Henshaw, Bundee Aki, Jacob Stockdale; Joey Carbery, Conor Murray; CJ Stander, Jordi Murphy, Peter O'Mahony (capt); Iain Henderson, James Ryan; John Ryan, Rob Herring, Jack McGrath.

Reserves: Sean Cronin, Cian Healy, Tadhg Furlong, Quinn Roux, Jack Conan, Kieran Marmion, Johnny Sexton, Jordan Larmour.

SPOTLIGHT

From fat to fit on road to the All Blacks for prop Tu'inukuafe

AFP
Auckland

Four years on from being told he was a prime candidate for a heart attack, former nightclub bouncer Karl Tu'inukuafe is 40 kilos lighter and on the verge of making his All Blacks debut. The giant loosehead prop still has to pinch himself to make sure his whirlwind rise to the top is not a dream, while even All Blacks coach Steve Hansen was asking "Karl who?"

There was a season in France with Narbonne and a some domestic rugby in New Zealand before a string of injuries to the Waikato Chiefs saw him promoted to Super Rugby as a fill-in prop three months ago. A further injury to All Black prop Tim Perry and the 25-year-old giant was rushed into the Test squad with a seat on the bench for the first Test against France in Auckland tomorrow.

"You have to do the job first and I'll think about it later," Tu'inukuafe said yesterday

when asked how it felt to be propelled into the All Blacks spotlight. If it were not for the All Blacks he would most likely be at his security job this weekend.

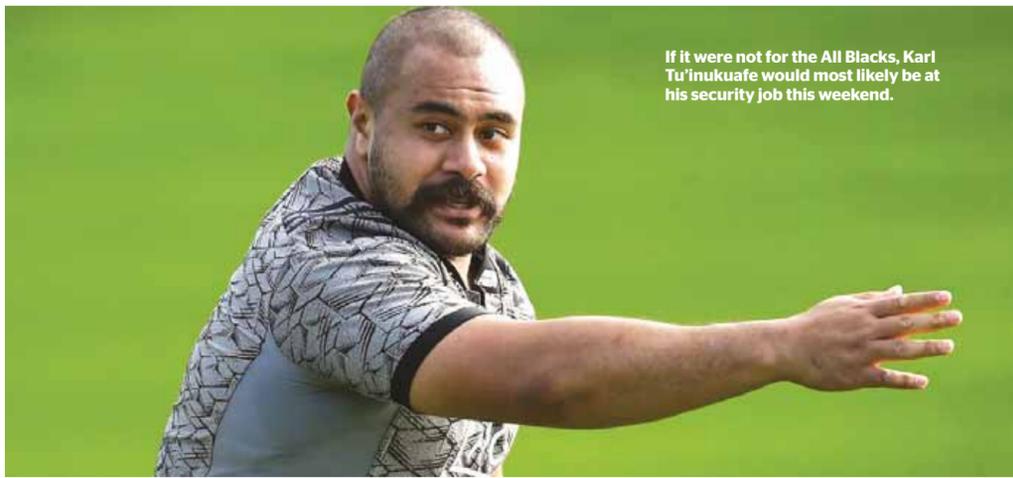
"It was mostly a desk job but I'd get on the doors at night sometimes to get some extra money in for working at clubs and stuff," he said when explaining his previous life. "From my heaviest before coming back to rugby, probably (I've lost) about 30, maybe 40 kilos. It was 2014. The doc was telling me to lose weight. I was complaining about a bit of pain in my legs and stuff and he was explaining about all the bad health decisions, like eating and stuff was just leading to a heart attack. So when he told me to lose weight the easiest way was to play rugby with my brothers and my family."

Hansen said Tu'inukuafe's story was proof that a player did not have to be noticed young and be put through an academy to make it to the All Blacks. "I'd never heard of him before he got to the Chiefs and I don't think the Chiefs had until they had to go and find him," Hansen said.

"It was one of those seasons for the Chiefs where they've had a humongous amount of injuries, particularly at loosehead prop, and they had to go deep into the well. When I say I hadn't heard of him, I mean he wasn't someone who was sitting on top of our radar. Obviously we knew he had played rugby before and we knew a little bit about him but he's not someone you'd say, 'Hey let's keep an eye on this guy because he's going to be the future,'" he added.

Hansen added his progress was fastracked by others' injuries but said Tu'inukuafe had seized the opportunity. "He's raw, as you'd expect with the history he's got, but he's a good scrummager."

Tu'inukuafe said that being an All Black gave him a chance to repay New Zealand for the opportunities given to his parents. "I was born here but my parents were born in Tonga, (and) grandparents born in Tonga, but this country gave them opportunities for a better life and to play for this jersey, it is a huge privilege and honour to do that for what they did for my family."



If it were not for the All Blacks, Karl Tu'inukuafe would most likely be at his security job this weekend.

FORMULA 1

Hamilton returns to happy hunting ground

'We can see that we are in a stronger position in both championships than we were 12 months ago, but we know the battle is more fierce with ourselves, Ferrari and Red Bull in contention every weekend'

AFP
Montreal

Lewis Hamilton returns to his happiest stomping ground this weekend when he seeks to extend his world championship lead with a record-equalling seventh triumph at the Canadian Grand Prix.

The defending four-time champion, who leads nearest rival and fellow four-time champion Sebastian Vettel by 14 points after six races, claimed his maiden Formula One win at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve in 2007.

Since then Hamilton has added five more wins including a hat-trick of Mercedes triumphs in 2015, 2016 and 2017 to move within reach of becoming the first man to secure four straight pole positions - he converted pole in each of those years - and four consecutive wins.

Hamilton's pole success last year enabled him to equal three-time champion Ayrton Senna's record of 65 pole positions, a feat that saw him presented by the Senna family with a helmet worn by the great Brazilian.

That display of emotion confirmed Hamilton's unchallenged supremacy in Montreal, but he faces a much more difficult challenge from rivals this weekend as the leading teams take their scheduled revised second engines of the season.

Mercedes team chief Toto Wolff said: "We expect a number of teams to take their second power units, including all the Mercedes cars. We are pushing for more performance as soon as possible."

"We can see that we are in a stronger position in both championships than we were 12 months ago, but we know the battle is more fierce with ourselves, Ferrari and Red Bull in contention every weekend."

Like Mercedes, both Red Bull and Ferrari are expected to use new engines, but Red Bull technical boss Adrian Newey downplayed expectations, notably because Monaco victor Daniel Ricciardo faces grid penalties for other technical power-unit changes.

Newey suggested that Renault would gain only around one-tenth of a second per lap on a power-hungry track that suits Mercedes, but Wolff warned "past performances are no guarantee of success



Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve for the Canadian Formula One Grand Prix in Montreal, Canada. (Getty Images/AFP)

this year.

"We need to make sure we get the most from all the tyre compounds, including the 'hyper-soft', if we want to come out on top."

The team's struggles with the 'hyper-soft' tyre in Monte Carlo undermined them in qualifying, but their strategic approach enabled Hamilton to finish third and extend his record run of points-scoring races to 31.

The 33-year-old Briton, who loves spending time in North

America where he has additionally won the United States Grand Prix four times, arrived in Montreal on Tuesday night after visiting California, reportedly to check on his dogs Roscoe and Coco, and New York.

Vettel, winless in four races, finished second for Ferrari in Monaco. He has won before in Montreal, in 2013 with Red Bull, and was unlucky that a tactical error undid Ferrari's strategy with him in 2016.

Hamilton will know he and Ferrari remain a serious threat in what is expected to be a far more entertaining affair than the dull procession in Monte Carlo, even if Kimi Raikkonen faces a potential distraction after a Canadian waitress filed a lawsuit against him for touching her inappropriately in 2016.

The Finn, 38, has denied the claims and filed a counterclaim.

It will be a memorable weekend also for two-time champion Fern-

ando Alonso, who is entered for his 300th Grand Prix and, potentially, his 298th start.

He will join Brazilian Rubens Barrichello, Briton Jenson Button, the 2009 champion, and seven-time champion Michael Schumacher in the exclusive '300' club.

"It is going to be challenging," said the McLaren man.

"It's a tough circuit with long straights and our lack of speed may be a penalty for us."

BOXING

Parker looking forward to 'war' with Whyte

AFP
London

New Zealand's former world heavyweight champion Joseph Parker says he is willing to wage war with next opponent Englishman Dillian Whyte and the hope it earns the winner a world title bout. Parker, who lost his WBO belt to Britain's world champion Anthony Joshua in their bout in Cardiff in March, has accepted a tough clash with Whyte in London on July 28.

However, the 26-year-old Kiwi has no regrets about accepting the challenge against the 30-year-old Jamaica-born pugilist, who like Parker has lost to Joshua but pre the latter becoming world champion. "The last time I was here it was a great experience fighting in Cardiff," said Parker at a press conference in London announcing the fight yesterday. "We didn't get the result but I feel it's a great time to come back."

"Credit to Dillian and myself for putting our hands up to fight each other. I'm looking forward to going back to training, and burning off the pies I've eaten in New Zealand. "He looked tremendous in his last fight (when stopping Lucas Browne); he said he wants a war, let's make it happen."

Whyte, who has overcome a violent and troubled adolescence becoming a father aged just 13 and has admitted but for boxing he would either be dead or in prison, believes Parker missed an opportunity against Joshua and he will not be getting a second chance.

"He had his big moment, and he didn't do enough," said Whyte, who is the number one challenger to Deontay Wilder's WBC belt. "I'm here to fight, I want to fight, give the fans big fights, this is a great fight, Joseph Parker will be hungry, motivated."

Whyte, who is on a run of seven successive victories with his last bout an eye-catching sixth round knockout of Australia's former WBA titleholder Lucas Browne in March, taunted Parker over what he claims is a reluctance to go toe to toe once in the ring.

"I just hope he leaves his running shoes at home on July 28 and comes to fight," said Whyte.

"Massive respect to him, he could have had a couple of easy fights but he wants a challenge. It's a big mistake but I'm sure he thinks differently. It's the biggest (heavyweight) fight outside the championships."



Dillian Whyte and Joseph Parker (right) pose after the press conference in London yesterday. (Reuters)

Woods to stay on yacht during US Open

Tiger Woods is planning to stay on board his \$20 million super-yacht during next week's US Open at Shinnecock Hills, it was reported on Tuesday. The New York Post's Page Six celebrity news site said Woods had decided to spend the week of the tournament on his 155-foot yacht named "Privacy".

Woods' yacht is docked at the exclusive Montauk Yacht Club, about an hour away from Shinnecock in Southampton. The former world number one's boat offers 6,500 square feet of living space, including a master suite and six other bedrooms. The vessel also includes a gym, movie theatre, full bar, eight-person hot tub and a scuba decompression chamber. Woods, 42, will be chasing his fourth US Open title at Shinnecock Hills next week as he continues his comeback after nearly two years out injured.

CYCLING

Alaphilippe pips Martin at Criterium summit

AFP
Lans-en-Vercors, France

Quick Step's Julian Alaphilippe beat a bevy of top-drawer climbing talent to win the fourth stage of the Criterium du Dauphine in a summit finish in lashing rain yesterday.

Sky's Gianni Moscon emerged as the new yellow jersey after finishing in the winning pack along with Ireland's Dan Martin, Welshman Geraint Thomas and the great French hope Romain Bardet of AG2R.

This first foray into the Alps saw an early escape which only ended with 400m to go when Martin dug in and caught the last survivor the Italian Dario Cataldo of Astana.

Martin, who rides for Emirates, went for the line setting a pace too hot for overnight leader Michal Kwiatkowski. Despite losing a little ground, the Pole is still level second with Sky teammate Geraint Thomas at 6sec in the overall classification. Martin, Bardet and Thomas were all overtaken a couple of metres before the finish line as Alaphilippe, who rides for Quickstep, timed his late burst to perfection.

"I felt great and knew I had a chance to win just looking at the race profile before the race," said the Frenchman who is fourth in the overall at 48sec.

"I was uncomfortable in all that rain but I just gave it everything I had in the last 50 metres," he said. Friday's stage culminates with a 12.7km climb at an average gradient of 7 percent, which may suit a climber such as Briton Adam Yates of Mitchelton or Bardet, who are 7th and 9th respectively at 1min 11sec and 1min 49sec.



France's Julian Alaphilippe celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the fourth stage of the 70th edition of the Criterium du Dauphine cycling race between Chazey-sur-Ain and Lans-en-Vercors yesterday. (AFP)

CRICKET

Saleem, Asif shine for their teams in Ramadan Cup

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Saleem unleashed a flurry of thrilling strokes and his 90-run knock engineered a comfortable six-wicket victory for Friends XI against QIE in the Ramadan Cup Twenty20 Cricket Tournament, hosted by the Qatar Cricket Association.

At the Asian Town Cricket Stadium on Wednesday, QIE managed 130 for five in 15 overs after batting first. Javed was instrumental in limiting them with his three for 29. Rahul hit two sixes and three fours in 33 and Shrikant had two sixes and a four in 31. Intihan and Aziz collected 20 and 18 not out, respectively.

Saleem, the man of the match, went on a rampage during the chase. The opener blasted eight sixes and seven boundaries to bolt to 90 in 43 deliveries. His 85-run stand for the first wicket with Alam, who made 23 with three fours, set up the win in 11.5 overs.

In another match, Asif Umer (four for 17) joined hands with Shihab and Sherin to spark Selex to a fine eight-wicket triumph against Masters Club. The bowling trio limited the opponents to 109 for nine in 15 overs. Rabie

(27), Talha (17) and Khalid (14) were the main scorers. Shihab and Sherin accounted for two scalps apiece.

Selex needed 12.4 overs to collect the victory after Asif Ashraf cracked three sixes and four boundaries to get 51. Shihab added an unbeaten 26, while Suresh also finished with 14 not out. Talha and Khalid got one wicket each.

Asif Umer was declared the man of the match for his splendid bowling.

BRIEF SCORES

B & C Divisions
Friends XI beat QIE by six wickets

QIE: 130 for five in 15 overs (Rahul 33 in 26 balls, Shrikant 31 in 19 balls, Intihan 22 in 20 balls, Aziz 18 not out in 13 balls; Javed 3/29, Arshad 1/12)
Friends XI: 131 for four in 11.5 overs (Saleem 90 in 43 balls, Alam 23 in 15 balls, Nuwan 2/20)

Man of the match: Saleem (Friends XI)

Selex beat Masters Club by eight wickets

Masters Club: 109 for nine in 15 overs (Rabie 27 in 20 balls, Talha 17 in 18 balls; Asif Umer 4/17, Shihab 2/13, Sherin 2/22)
Selex: 112 for two in 12.4 overs (Asif Ashraf 51 in 31 balls, Shihab 26 in 20 balls; Talha 1/17, Khalid 1/21)

Man of the match: Asif Umer (Selex)



Saleem and Asif Umer (below) were given Man of the Match awards in their respective matches.



FIRST TEST

Dowrich powers Windies to 350 for 7

AFP

Port of Spain

Shane Dowrich compiled a patient, invaluable hundred and enjoyed stubborn support from Devendra Bishoo in frustrating Sri Lanka's bowling and lifting the West Indies to 350 for seven at tea yesterday.

In the face of mounting criticism over his place in the team, especially after vulnerability to short-pitched bowling was exposed in the two-match series in New Zealand six months earlier, Dowrich responded in the best possible manner with a determined effort on the second day of the first of three Tests.

He reached his second Test century off the final ball of the session at the Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad, turning a delivery from Rangana Herath through square-leg to reach the landmark off the 282nd delivery he faced and after more than five hours in the middle.

There were ten fours to embellish an innings that will nevertheless be remembered more for its doggedness than the extravagance which he curtailed to

a considerable degree.

Dowrich's partnership with Bishoo was worth 102 for the seventh wicket, an effort which began late on the first day and continued deep into the afternoon session of day two when the lower-order player eventually fell for a vital innings of 40.

seamer Suranga Lakmal took a deserved second wicket of the innings via a catch at gully by Roshen Silva as Bishoo flashed once too often at the faster bowlers to again fall short of a maiden Test half-century.

Concerns over the fitness of Lakmal and champion left-arm spinner Herath clearly hampering his ability to engage his bowling resources as effectively as he wanted to, Sri Lankan captain Dinesh Chandimal employed his other options without success.

Seamers Lahiru Gamage and Lahiru Kumara, who picked up three wickets and was by far the best of the bowlers on day one, together with off-spinner Dilruwan Perera failed to make any real impact on the overnight pair as batting conditions improved through the day.

Rain had limited play to just 43 minutes in the morning ses-

sion during which time Dowrich and Bishoo added 22 runs without ever looking to be in any real discomfort. A brighter afternoon appeared to work in favour of the batsmen as the bowlers failed to present any effective challenge to the pair.

As is his tendency, Bishoo occasionally flirted with danger in attempting to take on the occasional short-pitched deliveries, more than once getting a top-edge that fell clear of the desperate fielders.

When his luck eventually ran out, new batsman Kemar Roach supported with typical stoicism in support of Dowrich's quest for a hundred.

Nerves were getting the better of the wicketkeeper-batsman in the final over before tea, though, when a sweep was top-edged out of the reach of the close fielders. It brought him two runs to take him to 99 and it was with a mixture of relief and celebration that he greeted the single that took him to the landmark.

Lakmal, the lone wicket-taker for the day, has been by some distance the pick of the Sri Lankan bowlers on day two with Herath still looking a bit short of work despite bowling 27 overs.

ON THE BALL

BY RYAN WOLD
GULF TIMES
08-06-2018



SPOTLIGHT

Sri Lanka plans tougher laws

AFP

Colombo

Sri Lanka will enact tougher laws and create a special police unit to deal with match-fixing following a TV documentary exposing global corruption in cricket, the sports minister said yesterday.

Faiszer Musthapha said existing laws were inadequate to deal with match-fixing and other forms of cheating exposed in the Al Jazeera documentary.

The minister said the International Cricket Council (ICC) had advised him to legislate against the practice after three Sri Lanka officials were filmed agreeing to sway matches.

"I am getting new laws drafted for this purpose and I am also proposing a special police unit to enforce the proposed legislation," Musthapha told reporters in Colombo after returning home from talks with the ICC in Dubai.

Sri Lanka's cricket board has already suspended three of its employees — two coaches and the curator of an international stadium — after they were caught in the undercover sting by Al Jazeera. The board has also lodged a complaint with police, who have launched a criminal investigation. *Cricketer's Match-Fixers*, broadcast on May 27, suggested that England and Australia players had also been involved in match-fixing in India.

England captain Joe Root and Australia skipper Tim Paine have dismissed the allegations relating to their respective teams.

HONOUR

Kohli named Indian cricketer of the year for the fifth time

AFP

New Delhi

Virat Kohli won India's cricketer of the year award for the fifth time yesterday for outstanding performances over the past two seasons.

Kohli became India's captain in 2015 and led his team back to number one place in the Test rankings the following year.

The 29-year-old, who was also named International Cricket Council player of the year in January, amassed 1,332 runs in 13 Tests in 2016-2017.

He also averaged 84.22 for his 1,516 runs in 27 one-day internationals.



In six Tests in 2017-18, the star batsman has scored 896 runs at an average of 89.6.

Kohli will receive the prestigious Polly Umrigar award, named after a former India captain, and a \$45,000 prize at a Board of Control for Cricket

in India (BCCI) function in Bangalore on June 12.

He previously won the award in 2012, 2015, 2016 and 2017.

The prize is not granted in every calendar year, due to scheduling issues, and is determined on previous seasons' performances.

Known as "King Kohli" in his home country, the player was recently ranked the highest paid cricketer in the world, at 83rd in the *Forbes'* list of big earning athletes.

It estimated his annual earnings at \$24mn.

In line with his status as a national hero, a wax effigy of Kohli was unveiled on Wednesday at the Madame Tussauds museum in New Delhi.

FOCUS

Tendulkar junior picked for India Under-19 team

AFP

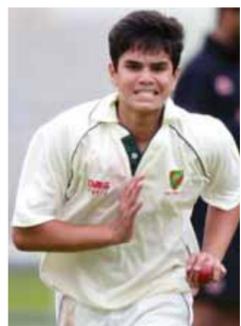
New Delhi

Arjun Tendulkar, son of Indian batting great Sachin Tendulkar, was yesterday named in an Under-19 squad for two four-day matches in Sri Lanka.

Arjun, 18, was picked as part of a 15-member squad by the country's junior selection committee, according to a press release by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

An all-rounder who bowls and bats left-handed, Arjun has been playing junior cricket for Mumbai.

Standing at over six feet, the left-arm quick bowler has claimed 18 wickets from five



domestic matches at the U-19 level including a five-wicket haul.

He came under the international spotlight when he bowled in the nets in the lead-up to the

Lord's Test between England and South Africa in 2017.

Arjun was however overlooked for the five one-dayers which the juniors will play during the July 11-August 11 tour after the four-day games.

Sachin, revered in cricket-mad India, also began his career with Mumbai's junior team before being picked for the senior side at the age of 15.

He scored an unbeaten century on his debut in the Ranji Trophy, Indian cricket's interstate championship.

He won his first cap for India a year later before going on to become the highest scorer in the history of Test cricket as well as the first player to score 100 international centuries. He retired in 2013.



Shane Dowrich of West Indies bats on the way to his century against Sri Lanka at the Queen's Park Oval, Port of Spain, Trinidad, yesterday.

BOTTOMLINE

Khan spins Afghans to T20 sweep over Bangladesh

AFP

Dehradun

Spin sensation Rashid Khan bowled an excellent last over to help Afghanistan eke out a thrilling one-run win over Bangladesh and complete a series whitewash in the third Twenty20 international yesterday.

Chasing 146 for victory, Bangladesh required nine in the 20th over but Khan held his nerve to restrict Bangladesh to 144-6 in the north Indian city of Dehradun.

The Asghar Stanikzai-led Afghanistan, who await their Test debut against India on June 14 in Bangalore, triumphed 3-0 after winning the first two games comprehensively.

Mushfiqur Rahim, who hit 46, and Mahmudullah Riyad, who made 45, put together a gritty 84-run fifth-wicket partnership to give Bangladesh hope of a consolation win.

Mushfiqur, who was named man of the match, smashed five fours in the penultimate over but fell to Khan's leg spin on



the first delivery of the final over.

Mahmudullah tried to get four off the final ball but Shafiqullah Shafiq's acrobatic work at the long-on boundary got the batsman run out in a dramatic finish to the game.

The 19-year-old Khan, who topped the bowling chart with eight wickets and the man of the series award, returned figures of 1-24.

Earlier Afghanistan batsman Samiullah Shenwari made an unbeaten 33 to lift

his side to 145-6 after they elected to bat first.

Afghanistan were in trouble at 101-4 in the 15th over against a disciplined Bangladesh bowling attack but Shenwari's 28-ball knock gave them a winning total.

England's Rhodes named new Bangladesh coach

AFP, Dhaka: Bangladesh yesterday named former England Test cricketer Steve Rhodes as head coach, ending a long hunt for a successor to Sri Lankan Chandika Hathurusingha. Rhodes, 53, told reporters in Dhaka that Bangladesh is "a wonderful cricket nation. The support that the boys get in the Bangladesh team is tremendous." "Personally to be involved in a major role, to be given the responsibility by the President and Board, is a fantastic honour and it's a privilege to be involved in Bangladesh cricket," he added. Bangladesh have been without a coach since Hathurusingha stepped down in October after a successful three-year stint. West Indies great Courtney Walsh, in charge of the team's fast bowling unit, was given interim overall responsibility during a T20 tri-nations tour-

namment in Sri Lanka in March. Walsh is also in charge of the team in the ongoing Twenty20 international series against Afghanistan in India, which Bangladesh have already lost. The Bangladesh Cricket Board hired South African Test cricketer Gary Kirsten as its consultant to help it find the right person for the job. "Steve Rhodes was on top of our list. His name was also in Kirsten's list. We spoke to him face to face today and we are satisfied fully," BCB head Nazmul Hassan told reporters. Wicketkeeper-batsman Rhodes, who played 11 Tests and nine one-day internationals for England, has been given a two-year contract lasting until the 2020 ICC World Twenty20. He coached Worcestershire county team in England for 11 years until being sacked last year.