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Thursday, October 11, 2018  
Safar 2, 1440 AH

# GULF TIMES SPORT



TENNIS

'Very close': Federer makes shaky start to title defence

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CRICKET / PAK VS AUS, DAY 4, 1ST TEST

# Abbas' triple brings Pakistan closer to win over Australia

Pakistan need seven wickets while Australia require another 326 runs for a victory

AFP  
Dubai

Hard-working fast bowler Mohamed Abbas took three wickets in seven balls to bring Pakistan closer to victory in the first Test against Australia in Dubai yesterday.

The right-arm medium pacer dismissed Aaron Finch (49) and the Marsh brothers – Shaun and Mitchell – for ducks as Australia slumped from 87 without loss to finish the fourth day at 136-3.

At stumps opener Usman Khawaja was batting on a fighting 50 and Travis Head on 34 as the pair had added an invaluable 49 for the unbroken fourth wicket stand to prolong Australia's resistance on a weary and spinning Dubai stadium pitch.

Pakistan will need seven more wickets while Australia require another 326 runs for an improbable victory to take a 1-0 lead in the two-match series, with the second Test starting in Abu Dhabi from October 16.

Abbas said he was "happy to be among the wickets".

"I used the crease to bring the ball in and got wickets from those deliveries," he said.

"We need seven more wickets so, God willing, we will get them and get this win for which we have worked very hard and it will be good to take a lead in the series."

## AUSTRALIAN REPLAY

It was an action replay of the first innings as Australian openers put on 87 – they made 142 in their total of 202 on Tuesday – as Finch was trapped leg-before soon after tea with a sharp incoming delivery from Abbas.

Finch, who took an unsuccessful review, hit five boundaries in his knock.

Two balls later Abbas had the elder Marsh caught behind and in his next over trapped Mitchell right in front of the stumps only to get the decision on review.

But it was Finch and Khawaja in the afternoon session who batted with resolve.

Pakistan-born Khawaja, who top scored for Australia with 85 in the first innings, held one end intact with resolute batting, having so far hit six boundaries.

Abbas has figures of 3-26 to add to his four wickets in the first innings, but leg-spinner Yasir Shah was still wicketless in the match.

If Australia still wish to win this match they will have to rewrite the history books as the highest chase in all Test cricket is West Indies's 418-7, made against Australia at Antigua in 2003.

Pakistan, who were 45 for three overnight, declared 7.5 overs after lunch on 181-6 at the fall of Asad Shafiq's wicket for 41.



Pakistan's Mohamed Abbas (top) celebrates after taking the wicket of Australia's Shaun Marsh during the fourth day of the first Test in Dubai yesterday. (AFP)

Pakistan made 482 in their first innings while in reply Australia were dismissed for 202.

Jon Holland, who took the key wicket of Azhar Ali for four on Tuesday, dismissed opener Imam-ul-Haq for 48, caught and bowled off a flighted delivery.

Debutant Marnus Labuschagne then had Haris Sohail caught close to the slips for 39, leaving Pakistan at 110-4. Sohail and Imam had added 65 runs for the fourth wicket.

Holland had figures of 3-83 from 20 overs while off-spinner Nathan Lyon took 2-58.

## Scorecard

<b>PAKISTAN</b> 1st inn	482 all out	Extras	(b 2, lb 2) 4	U. Khawaja batting	50
<b>AUSTRALIA</b> 1st inn	202 all out	<b>Total</b> (for 6wks dec: 575 overs) 181		S. Marsh c Ahmed b Abbas	0
<b>PAKISTAN</b> 2nd inn (c/n: 45/3)		<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-37 (Hafeez), 2-38 (Asif), 3-45 (Ali), 4-110 (Imam), 5-110 (Sohail), 6-181 (Shafiq)		M. Marsh lbw b Abbas	0
Ulmam-ul-Haq c & b Holland	48			T. Head batting	34
M. Hafeez c Labuschagne b Holland	17			<b>Extras</b>	(lb 3) 3
B. Asif c Head b Lyon	0	<b>Bowling:</b> Starc 6-1-18-0, Lyon 25.5-6-58-2, Siddle 21-3-0, Holland 20-3-83-3, Head 1-0-6-0, Labuschagne 3-0-9-1		<b>Total</b> (for 3 wks; 50 overs) 136	
A. Ali lbw b Holland	4			<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-87 (Finch), 2-87 (S. Marsh), 3-87 (M. Marsh)	
H. Sohail lbw b Labuschagne	39	<b>AUSTRALIA</b> 2nd innings		<b>Bowling:</b> Abbas 11-2-26-3, Hafeez 2-0-10-0, Shah 15-1-42-0, Riaz 7-2-13-0, Asif 13-3-40-0, Sohail 2-1-2-0	
A. Shafiq c M. Marsh b Lyon	41	A. Finch lbw b Abbas	49		
B. Azam not out	28				

FOCUS

# Qatar's al-Attiyah tops entry for Kuwait rally



By A Correspondent  
Kuwait City

Six-time event winner and defending FIA Middle East Rally champion Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah tops a fascinating entry list for next month's Kuwait International Rally, the fourth round of the 2018 FIA Middle East Rally Championship (MERC). The event takes place on November 1-3.

Bidding to win the regional title for the 14th time in 17 years, al-Attiyah teams up with his usual French navigator Matthieu Baumel at the head of an international field of competitors from Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Jordan, France, Czech Republic, Italy and Portugal.

Local hopes rest firmly on the shoulders of Meshari al-Thefri and his Qatari co-driver Nasser al-Kuwari. The Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution X driver tops the Group N or showroom category and is hoping to confirm a fourth MERC 2 title after pushing al-Attiyah for the overall award last season.

Other Kuwaiti drivers on the list include Jassim al-Muqahwi, Masoud al-Saleh, Mohamed al-Thefri, Farad al-Mutairi and Mubarak al-Thefri.

One of the surprise names on the entry list is that of former Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF) president Nasser Khalifa al-Attiyah.

Al-Attiyah, also a former FIA and FIM vice-president, was a regular on the regional rallying scene throughout the 1990s. In

1993, he missed out on the overall MERC title to Sheikh Hamed bin Eid al-Thani. He then made the transition to administration and will now be tackling the special stages again. He did compete at a Ha'il International Rally a few years ago in a Land Rover.

He has called upon the services of Nicola Arena, the Italian navigator to the late 2010 MERC champion Misfer al-Marri, to keep him on the straight and narrow over the demanding Kuwaiti gravel and sandy special stages.

Czech driver Vojtech Staff knows that a rally win could keep his title hopes alive, while the entry is bolstered by the likes of last year's Qatar International Rally winner Rashed al-Nuami, the Jordanian duo of three-time national champion Khaled Juma (2015, 2016 and 2018) and Ihab al-Shorafat, Oman's MERC 2 front-runner Abdullah al-Rawahi and Lebanon's MERC 3 series leader Henry Kahy.

The Kuwait International Rally returns to the calendar after a one-year absence and is being organised by the Basil Salem al-Sabah Motor Racing Club (BMRC) under the chairmanship of Sheikh Athbi Nayef Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah and in conjunction with the General Authority for Sport and the Kuwait International Automobile Club (KIAC).

Competitive action will get underway with a timed super special at 16.00hrs on November 1 after the ceremonial start at Kuwait's exciting new Motor Town Race Circuit. Entries officially close on Saturday (October 13).



Former QMMF president Nasser Khalifa al-Attiyah (right) will be tackling the special stages again at Kuwait International Rally.

## FOCUS

## Refugee team to take part at Tokyo 2020: IOC

Reuters  
Buenos Aires

Refugees will take part in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Tuesday said it would form a refugee team for the second consecutive Summer Games.

IOC President Thomas Bach asked members of the Olympic body at its session in Buenos Aires to support the creation of a refugee team, along the lines of the one that competed at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games. The members responded with applause.

"So you have created the refugee Olympic team, Tokyo 2020," Bach said.

The German said the IOC had



In this August 5, 2016, picture, the Refugee Olympic Athletes team arrives for the opening ceremony at the Rio 2016 Olympics. (Reuters)

already identified a pool of more than 50 refugee athletes and it was necessary to keep the world aware of the plight of the tens of millions of refugees around the world.

"There is one unfortunate

reason for the creation of this team," Bach told a news conference. "This is the fact that the reasons we created the first ever team still persist. We have altogether 68.5mn refugees in this world."

"Through sport we want to make a contribution to keep the world aware of this problem and this challenge and that it does not disappear from the conscience of the world, and send another signal of hope to these refugees."

There were no details yet on the final size or makeup of the team but Bach said the pool of potential athletes for the team could grow more.

"Last time (for Rio) we were under very high time pressure. Now we have two years. We have already taken precaution... and we have a pool of athletes in place. Already now we're supporting 51 or 52 refugee athletes who we have identified," Bach said.

"This pool can still grow in the run-up to Tokyo 2020. It is too early to say how many will

finally make it."

The IOC unveiled its first team of refugees in an effort to raise awareness of the issue and it was one of the feel-good stories of the Rio Olympics.

The 10-member team from Syria, Congo, Ethiopia and South Sudan hogged the spotlight after marching as the penultimate team before host nation Brazil in the Opening Ceremony at the Olympic stadium.

The athletes took part in athletics, swimming and judo.

The IOC has continued supporting these athletes, some of whom attended the IOC session in the Argentine capital.

The IOC had said last year it was considering forming such a team again for the Tokyo Games and has continued to support the athletes who took part in Rio.

## GOLF

## Thomas rejects Reed claim in Ryder Cup row

Reed had said he was 'blindsided' by being grouped with Woods

AFP  
Kuala Lumpur

Former world number one Justin Thomas gave his backing to Jim Furyk yesterday after the USA Ryder Cup captain was accused over his pairings in their heavy defeat to Europe.

Thomas supported Furyk's assertion that the pairings were decided well in advance, after Masters champion Patrick Reed said he was "blindsided" by being grouped with Tiger Woods rather than Jordan Spieth.

Reed's comments were chief amongst the recriminations in the US camp after their 17.5 to 10.5 loss at Le Golf National, along with Phil Mickelson's complaint that the rough at the French course was too unforgiving.

Reed told the *New York Times* that "the issue is obviously with Jordan not wanting to play with me", a comment which Furyk rejected when he said the pairings were decided weeks before and made known to the team.

And Thomas told reporters at the CIMB Classic in Malaysia: "That (the pairing) was something obviously that had been talked about in advance, but all



2018 Ryder Cup US team captain Jim Furyk (centre).

I was worried about was that I knew I was going to play with Jordan and we wanted to take care of our match.

"So, you do your job, and Jordan's and mine was to go out

and get a point and that's what we were fortunate enough to get at least three out of four.

"But no, everybody has their own thoughts and feelings, but at the end of the day we just

didn't play well enough."

Reed formed a successful partnership with Spieth when USA won the 2016 Ryder Cup, but he and Woods lost both their fourball matches at Le Golf National.

Thomas and Spieth delivered three points from their four matches and Thomas, the most successful of the American players, also beat Rory McIlroy in the singles.

"It's so easy to look at the captains and say it's their fault, but at the end of the day we didn't play well enough," Thomas said.

"The Europeans played exponentially better than we did, that's why they beat us as bad they did."

The world number four has won the CIMB Classic twice in the past three years, after recording his first PGA Tour win at the tournament in 2015.

But he returns to face a different challenge at TPC Kuala Lumpur after a change in the grass on all fairways and greens.

"I would like to still think that I have a good chance. It is a different, but it's the same golf course. It's just the grass, the fairways are different, the conditions are different," said Thomas.

## Europe captain Bjorn mulls calling time on golf career



Victorious Ryder Cup captain **Thomas Bjorn** said yesterday he could call time on his playing career after admitting it will take "something special" to be competitive again.

Bjorn has not recorded a top-10 finish since a year before he was made captain and slumped to 884th in the world as his own game took a back seat to his leadership role.

The 47-year-old Dane returns to action at this week's British Masters at Walton Heath alongside four members of his team - Tommy Fleetwood, Francesco Molinari, Justin Rose and Thorbjorn Olesen - but has not ruled out hanging up his spikes.

"These next few months it's just about coming back down to earth and trying to find myself and figure out what's in store for me going forward," said Bjorn.

"I can't stand up and say, 'OK, I'm going to go full at it now and that's the only focus I'm going to have', because that has left me, especially in the last 12 months."

"So I need a bit of time to figure out if I have that motivation. At 47, after pretty much two years away, it's going to take a lot of hard work to get back to playing good golf."

## CRICKET

## First England-Lanka ODI washed out

AFP  
Dambulla, Sri Lanka

England's first one-day international in Sri Lanka was abandoned yesterday after several hours of monsoon rain in Dambulla.

The visitors, put into bat after Sri Lanka's new captain Dinesh Chandimal won the toss, breezed to 92 for 2 in 15 overs before the heavens opened.

The match, the first in a series of five, was then called off early evening.

England's openers had sped to 49 in eight overs before Nuwan Pradeep had Jonny Bairstow caught behind for 25 and Jason Roy miscued offspinner Akila Dananjaya and was caught for 24.

Joe Root and captain Eoin Morgan then put on a brisk 41-run stand featuring five fours and a six before the deluge arrived.

World number one England had handed ODI debuts to fast bowler Olly Stone, 25, and left-arm spinner Liam Dawson, 28, leaving out both Curran brothers.

Sri Lanka's XI featured left-arm wrist spinner Lakshan Sandakan, who was left out from the Asia Cup squad, and fast bowler Pradeep, who has not played an international since January, largely owing to injury.

Monsoon rains impeded Sri Lanka's training on the day before the match, and had also washed out one of England's warm-up games.

England have won 29 of their last 39 ODIs, while the hosts are ranked eighth and have lost 30 of their last 40 completed games.

The second ODI is scheduled for Saturday. After the five-match ODI series the sides play one Twenty20 game and three Tests.

## REGULATION

## ICC to tighten sanctions on leagues

AFP  
Dubai

World cricket's governing body will tighten up how various Twenty20 and T10 leagues are sanctioned in the future when it meets next week, a top official said yesterday.

Since the inception of a lucrative Indian Premier League, many ICC member countries have launched their own leagues in what is seen by some as a threat to five-day Test cricket and international cricket fixtures.

The latest format showcased in the game is the ICC-sanctioned T10 (10-over-a-side) league held in Sharjah last year.

Geoff Allardice, general manager of cricket for the International Cricket Council (ICC), said the matter would be discussed at the body's board meeting in Singapore on October 20.

"One of the things we will be talking about in our meeting next week is around regulations and sanctioning of events and also the release of players (for leagues)," Allardice told media.

"So you look at all of the documentation and the ownership structures and how the league is going to be funded and all these types of things and then you provide approval."

"It's not just going to be an open door for any promoter to come in. I think it will be a bit harder to get sanctions in the future and any tournament would need both the support of the home country and the ICC."

The Masters Cricket League (involving retired and semi-retired players) held in United Arab Emirates (UAE) hit a snag after

its first and only edition in 2016, with non payments to players.

The Pakistan Cricket Board also raised reservations over the T10 league, the second edition of which will start next month in Sharjah, after the Indian sponsors of the event were investigated back home over wrongdoings.

"So the future success of a league is in jeopardy. The other thing is if we get reports that that sort of things happen then the likelihood of sanctioning the second edition of a league is significantly reduced," said Allardice, a former first class cricketer from Australia.

**The one thing about Test cricket is that players want to play Test cricket. Some of those players (preferring leagues) aren't regular Test cricketers at the time they make their decisions**

— Geoff Allardice  
ICC General Manager

"I think perhaps the hurdles to jump for a promoter to put on a T20 league are going to be a bit higher and that the vetting process by both the host country and by the ICC would be enhanced."

Allardice, however, was adamant that players were not snubbing Test cricket, saying: "The one thing about Test cricket is that players want to play Test cricket. Some of those players (preferring leagues) aren't regular Test cricketers at the time they make their decisions."

Allardice added that leagues should be good for players.

"It's a balance because the leagues can be a good vehicle for promoting cricket in new countries."

## SPOTLIGHT

## 'Jaded' Fleetwood still dreaming of Race to Dubai crown

AFP  
London

Tommy Fleetwood admits he is feeling "jaded" after a gruelling season as he tries to catch Ryder Cup partner Francesco Molinari and win the Race to Dubai for a second year in succession.

Fleetwood is second in the money list behind Open champion Molinari, with whom he won all four of their matches together at Le Golf National in Europe's victory over the United States.

The duo will be reunited in the first two rounds of this week's British Masters at Walton Heath as Fleetwood seeks to close the gap of 1.4 mn points to the other half of the "Moliwood" pair.

"I'm starting to feel jaded a little bit," Fleetwood said. "I practised at home on Monday so I am still trying to tick over and work on things and get better."

Fleetwood, who will play in China and Turkey before contesting the season-ending event in Dubai, added: "I'm a long way

behind but it's the opposite of last year in that I led all year last year and this year for the final few events I'm kind of chasing it now.

"I might get nowhere near and it's a stretch as a goal to think about it, but I'd love to play Dubai with a chance. I'd love to get in contention in a couple of events and maybe win one."

"There's probably people I would prefer to beat, but if it came down to me and Fran either way I'm going to be more than happy whichever way that would turn out."

Ryder Cup captain Thomas Bjorn is also in the field at Walton Heath, although the 47-year-old is not overly concerned about his performance.

"Shooting 84 or 64 is not going to make any difference in my mind," he said. "I'm going to enjoy 2018 for what it has been and then figure out what is in store for me going forward."

"It's been fun to reflect on the Ryder Cup and I keep saying to the players that we will always have that moment in time and that's pretty cool."

## ATHLETICS

## 'Overdue' statue for Aussie 'Black Power' sprinter

AFP  
Melbourne

Australia will erect a statue of a homegrown sprinter who backed two Americans in their famed Black Power salute at the 1968 Olympics, with authorities describing the honour as "seriously overdue."

Peter Norman, silver medalist in the 200m in Mexico City, stood on the podium alongside US athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos, who both put a black-gloved fist in the air in a civil rights protest. The gesture caused outrage at the time but Norman quietly showed his solidarity with the Americans by wearing an Olympic Project for Human Rights badge.

Norman had spoken to the pair before the medal ceremony and agreed to wear the badge of the OPHR, a US civil rights organisation consisting of mainly black amateur athletes that campaigned to eradicate racism from sport.

As a result, he was frozen out of future Games selection and airbrushed from Australian Olympic history until recently. Athletics Australia said Nor-



In this October 16, 1968, picture, US athletes Tommie Smith (centre) and John Carlos (right) raise their gloved fists in the Black Power salute alongside Peter Norman (left) of Australia during the men's 200m podium ceremony at the Mexico Olympic Games. (AFP)

man's actions were now recognised as "one of Australian sports' most iconic moments and a special moment in Olympic history."

It said a bronze statue of Norman, jointly funded with the Victoria state

government, would be erected outside the Lakeside Stadium in Melbourne.

"Initiatives to honour Peter Norman, such as this statue, are seriously overdue," Athletics Australia president Mark Arbib said.

He said Australia would also recognise October 9, the date of Norman's funeral in 2006, as Peter Norman Day.

USA Track & Field has marked the date since 2006 and Norman's actions were appreciated in America far more swiftly than in his homeland.

Smith and Carlos were pallbearers at Norman's funeral, with Carlos urging Australians to "go and tell your kids the story of Peter Norman."

When the US Olympic Committee heard that the Australians had not invited Norman to Sydney 2000 celebrations, they invited him as part of their delegation.

Norman's daughter Janita said the family had immense pride in his stance. "That pride hasn't diminished with the passage of time, so to accept this statue 50 years on has only added to that feeling," she said.

The Australian Olympic Committee awarded Norman a posthumous Order of Merit in June this year.

## RETIREMENT

## Rehman quits international cricket

AFP  
Lahore

Former Pakistan left-arm spinner Abdur Rehman, who along with teammate Saeed Ajmal famously stunned England during a 3-0 defeat in 2012, announced his retirement from international cricket yesterday.

The 38-year-old took 19 wickets and Ajmal finished with 24 when Pakistan whitewashed the then-world number one Test team in the UAE six years ago.

However Rehman said he was disappointed as of late after being ignored by national selectors. "I am announcing retirement from international cricket with a heavy heart," Rehman said. "It was a tough decision but I have decided to call it a day."

Rehman finished his 22 Test career just one short of a deserved hundred wicket mark, while he took 30 in 31 ODIs and eight wickets in 11 Twenty20 internationals.

"I'm sad I couldn't get that 100th wicket, that would've really been something, but I'm still grateful for 99 wickets in 22 Tests. Very few left-arm spinners have that," he added.

Rehman's reputation was also briefly hit by a 12-week ban after failing a drugs test during a stint with Somerset just a few months after his brilliant bowling against England in 2012.

INTERNATIONAL FRIENDLY

# I don't need the armband to be a leader, says Pogba

World champions France face Iceland in a friendly in Guingamp today



France's Paul Pogba (right) and Mamadou Sakho during a training session at the Stade municipal de Roudourou in Guingamp, France, yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP  
Clairefontaine-en-Yvelines, France

France and Manchester United midfielder Paul Pogba said that his international teammates give him the freedom to express himself and be the team's leader. Pogba has faced criticism for failing to repeat his impressive performances at the World Cup for United, who have slumped early in the season.

The subject of Pogba's reportedly fraught relationship with United boss Jose Mourinho was strictly off the table for the interview at France's international training base. United's difficult start in the Premier League all seems a long way from France's glory in Russia, but reunited again with his France teammates, Pog-

ba was happy to recall that defender Adil Rami had described him as the team's "real leader" at the World Cup.

"It really pleased me to hear Adil say that," Pogba said. "I would never say it's me, it's the squad who put me in that position, who gave me the freedom to express myself. They gave me confidence as well. I couldn't have done it without them. It all began like that, from our training camp. I spoke with Hugo (Lloris), Blaise (Matuidi), (Raphael) Varane, to say that this World Cup we really had to put everything in place to win it. I was really determined."

Pogba made his France debut in 2013, and has racked up 62 caps while appearing at three major tournaments. "With my age, 25 years old, I'm between the two sets of players, the oldest and the youngest. That allows me to relay messages and

have the chance to be heard," he said. "I could say what I felt, give messages and pass them on from the older players to the younger ones. I was the go-between you could say."

France face Iceland in a friendly in Guingamp today and resume their Nations League campaign with a return clash at home to Germany on October 16, following a 0-0 draw in Munich last month. Despite taking on a key leadership role at the World Cup, a growing rift between Pogba and Mourinho saw the France international stripped of the United vice-captaincy last month.

He said the France captaincy was not one of his main goals. "I've never played in the France team to be captain, being here is already a big thing for me," he said. "You don't have to be captain in order to speak, a leader is not someone who has

the armband. As a leader you can talk on the pitch but I've seen leaders who didn't necessarily talk."

He cited former Italy midfielder Andrea Pirlo, a teammate of Pogba's at Juventus, as someone who could be relied upon to "show you the way on the pitch".

Pogba was one of six players in Didier Deschamps' squad to be nominated for the Ballon d'Or on Monday, and he believes the prize should go to one of his France teammates.

"It's all I hope for whatever happens, because there are a lot of them who deserve it," he said. "I'm not going to get into it, whether it's (Antoine) Griezmann, Kylian (Mbappe) or Raphael who deserve it much more than me. I can't pick one of them, but I sincerely hope it'll be one of those three, or even four because there's also NG (N'Golo Kante)."

SPOTLIGHT

## United in trouble and could lose Pogba: Deschamps

AFP  
Milan

Manchester United are in trouble and fans of Italian champions Juventus are right to dream of signing Paul Pogba, France's World Cup-winning coach Didier Deschamps said yesterday.

"All of Manchester United are in trouble. Pogba is still the same and is one of the best midfielders in the world," Deschamps told Italian newspaper *Gazzetta Dello Sport* of the tensions between Pogba and United boss Jose Mourinho. "However, I'll never comment on relationships between players and coaches."

Pogba has been linked with a return to Juventus, whom he joined for free in 2012 after walking out of United after the club failed to tie him to a new contract. He then returned to United in 2016 on a five-year contract for a then-record transfer fee of 105m euros (£89.3m).

Deschamps suggested the prospect of Pogba once again quitting United for Juventus was not so far-fetched. "Dreams are a part of life," he added. "Maybe the fans hadn't dreamed of Cristiano Ronaldo, who ended up signing. Sometimes dreams come true, but compared to a few years ago it would cost Juve a lot more to buy Pogba now."

Deschamps managed Juventus in the mid-2000s after the club were demoted from Serie A amid a match-fixing scandal, having played for five years with the club until 1999. "Today's Juve is as strong the one with which I won the Champions League in 1996," said the 49-year-old of the Italian champions' last European triumph.

"The difference is also down to details. This Juventus has the means to be among the favourites. Cristiano Ronaldo makes

Champions League victory almost obligatory. With him, Juventus have guaranteed a player who can be decisive in important moments. He is a great professional," Deschamps said.

"Serie A is an important league anyway, even if the Premier League is ahead because of the superior financial means. The arrival of Ronaldo guarantees greater exposure for the league abroad, a bit like Neymar in Ligue 1. Of course people talked about Juventus before, but it's clear that the marketing effect of a champion like CR7 (Ronaldo) allows you to reach every corner of the globe."

Deschamps, meanwhile, said he was happy coaching France but believes former France and Juventus teammate Zinedine Zidane could return to Italy having left Real Madrid last summer. "That position is already occupied by a great coach like (Massimiliano) Allegri, who is doing a great job," said Deschamps. "Maybe Zidane, with his Bianconero past like mine, will have his chance. We'll see."

Deschamps confirmed World Cup winner Blaise Matuidi was being ruled out of France's upcoming friendly against Iceland with a thigh problem.

France face Iceland in the Brittany town of Guingamp today before hosting Germany five days later, having come away from Munich with a scoreless draw in their Nations League competition opener last month.

Deschamps remains confident Juventus midfielder Matuidi will shake off the niggle in time for Tuesday's clash at the Stade de France in Paris. "He won't be used tomorrow, but there won't be any problem for Tuesday," said Deschamps.

Matuidi, who has not trained with the France squad this week hobbled off at half-time of Juve's 2-0 win at Udinese in Serie A on Saturday.



France coach Didier Deschamps. (Reuters)

FOCUS

## Russian police detain footballer facing lifetime ban over assault on officials

AFP  
Moscow

Russian police yesterday evening detained disgraced footballer Pavel Mamaev for 48 hours as a suspect in a criminal probe following an unprovoked attack on two government officials, while fellow suspect Alexander Kokorin was being questioned.

Premier League chiefs have requested a lifetime ban for Krasnodar midfielder Mamaev and Zenit Saint Petersburg forward Kokorin. They are also facing a possible five-year jail term after video footage caught them attacking two Russian trade ministry officials in an upscale Moscow cafe.

Police said Mamaev has been detained as a suspect under criminal investigation. "Pavel Mamaev has been detained according to the criminal code for 48 hours. He is suspected of hooliganism," police spokeswoman Irina Volk said.

The footage showed one of the officials, Denis Pak, an ethnic Korean, being hit with a chair while eating a meal. Now the former Russian international players, who have courted controversy in the past, could be banned for life from playing in Russia.

"This case is unusual in terms of our football and the league has addressed a request to the ethics committee of the Russian Football Union to impose a lifetime ban on Mamaev and Kokorin," Premier League spokesman Sergei Alekseyev said.

Although they have not yet been formally charged, the pair have been named by police as suspects in a criminal probe over hooliganism. Responding to a police summons, Mamaev arrived at Moscow's police's central investigation department yesterday afternoon for questioning.



Pavel Mamaev. (Reuters)

ov said the Kremlin — "just like the whole country" — was aware of the incident and described the video as "rather unpleasant".

Commentators, meanwhile, were keen to underline the players were not part of the Russia team that punched above its weight to reach the quarter-finals as hosts of the World Cup this summer. "We should specify that those two...are not currently members of the national squad," Igor Rabiner, a columnist for daily *Sport Express*, said.

Kokorin last played for the national side in late 2017, while Mamaev was last selected in 2016. Rabiner added: "The players who represented Russia at the World Cup dramatically changed the country's attitude to the game with their successful performance and that is diametrically opposed to this pair's deeds." For Alexei Lebedev, chief sports writer at *Moskovsky Komsomolets* daily, the ugly incident following the World Cup euphoria "has already transformed the image of Russian football and, unfortunately, not in the right direction."

"Fortunately, however, those responsible for Russian football and the Russian Premier League have understood this well," he said. "They reacted strongly."

It is not the first time the players' behaviour has raised eyebrows. The RFU suspended the pair in July 2016 after a video emerged from a Monte Carlo nightclub in which Mamaev and Kokorin allegedly spent \$296,000 on a champagne-fuelled party following Euro 2016, where Russia flopped.

Kokorin, who sat out the World Cup with a knee injury, later apologised for his behaviour and was welcomed back into the national team. Mamaev last played for Russia at Euro 2016. "Now they're just lowlifes who went berserk," Rabiner added. "Just ill-bred people who went crazy on the huge money that they receive from their clubs."

NATIONS LEAGUE

## With Reus out, Sane has a point to prove to Germany boss Loew

AFP  
Berlin

Manchester City winger Leroy Sane said yesterday that he plans to use his World Cup disappointment as motivation and seize his chance to impress Germany coach Joachim Loew in the upcoming Nations League clashes against the Netherlands and France.

After being voted the Premier League's Young Player of the Year last season, Sane, 22, was a surprise omission from the Germany squad that then crashed at the World Cup group stage. After playing just seven minutes off the bench in Germany's goalless Nations League draw against France in Munich last month, Sane, a left winger, missed the 2-1 friendly win over Peru in Sinsheim for the birth of his daughter.

Now, with Germany's first-choice left winger, Marco Reus, out with a knee injury, Sane could well have his chance to prove himself against Holland in Amsterdam on Saturday, then France in Paris next Tuesday.

"I've been thinking a lot about the summer and trying to improve my game so that the next time 'Jogi' (Loew) will not be able to leave me out," Sane told a press conference in Berlin yesterday.

"Of course, I was disappointed not to have been at the World Cup, it just makes me more mo-



Germany's midfielder Leroy Sane (right) and Julian Draxler laugh at joke during a press conference in Berlin yesterday. (AFP)

tivated. I want to improve every day. I'm working on being a better fit for the team, also in terms of tactics."

Sane, who made his international debut in 2015, has been in Germany's match day squad 19 times and collected 13 caps, starting six games and coming off the bench seven times. Loew implied Sane's lack of defensive work in his pre-World Cup appearances for Germany was why he missed the chance to play at Russia 2018 and assistant coach Marcus Sorg expanded on the theme.

"Leroy has always been committed, one way or another, it may not have always been how we wanted it, but we have to re-

member that he's a young person, he has coped well and he's where he needs to be," said Sorg.

Sane says the birth of his daughter has matured him, "now I have to also bear some responsibility away from the pitch. I am always pleased to see her when I come home."

After the double blows of the woeful World Cup performance and Mesut Ozil's scathing retirement from the Germany set-up, making accusations of racism and disrespect, the German FA (DFB) has launched a charm offensive.

Loew's squad held an open training session in Berlin on Tuesday, giving school children the chance to watch their heroes

## SPOTLIGHT

# Africa Cup offers Salah chance to regain form

When Salah last played for his country, he scored twice and missed two penalties against Niger

AFP  
Johannesburg

Liverpool star Mohamed Salah gets a chance to rediscover his scoring touch when he plays for Egypt against eSwatini (formerly Swaziland) in the Africa Cup of Nations this week.

After notching 44 goals for the English Premier League club in all competitions last season, the 26-year-old has managed only three this season, and just one in eight games since August. When Salah last played for his country, he scored twice and missed two penalties as the record seven-time African champions romped to a 6-0 win over Niger during September.

Niger are ranked 105 in the world – 31 places above eSwatini – so Egypt can realistically hope to score goals tomorrow at the Al Salam Stadium in Cairo.

Salah is the pride of Egypt having won the best goal and finished third in the best player category behind Luka Modric and Cristiano Ronaldo at the recent FIFA awards. He is also among 30 contenders for the Ballon d'Or prize bestowed annually by France Football magazine.

His recent scarcity of goals for Liverpool, and being substituted in a match at Chelsea, has drawn sympathy from Egyptian pundits. "Salah must not look back at last season, whether it was his goal scoring or his exceptional form," said Islam el-Shater in *Al-Masry Al-Youm*. "He must do what his manager (Jurgen Klopp) asks of him so that he does not lose his starting place."

Another columnist in that newspaper, Mohammed el-Bourmy, wrote: "Salah is being compared to Ronaldo and Messi and some possibly believed he could score 40 to 50 goals every season. He is not required to do that, but rather to have a good season with 20 goals to his name and enjoy himself."

Leading football commentator Hassan el-Mistekawi noted that "the Salah smile is missing since the start of the season because of the pressure he is under to score". While Egypt can boast of Salah, eSwatini have a caretaker coach and no stars with the squad comprised of locals and a sprinkling of players with South African second-tier clubs.

The countries will meet twice during the Cup of Nations window with the return match next Tuesday in Man-



Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah notched 44 goals last season, but has managed only three this season, and just one in eight games since August. (AFP)

zini, where the southern African nation lost 2-0 to Tunisia last month. Tunisia tackle Niger, whose squad have been complaining of a "beans-and-water" diet and unpaid bonuses, and must believe they can collect maximum points to stay top of Group J.

Struggling Gabon must have been encouraged by the two goals Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored for Arsenal against Fulham as they begin life under new coach Daniel Cousin. The

Panthers have failed to spark in Group C – losing away to Mali and being held at home by Burundi – and need two wins over pointless South Sudan to get back into contention.

Other Premier League stars set to feature include two team-mates of Salah at Liverpool – Sadio Mane of Senegal and Naby Keita of Guinea. Senegal tackle Group A strugglers Sudan and will expect three points in Dakar and at least one from the return match in Khartoum,

where sauna-like conditions present a challenge. Guinea share with Mali, Mauritania and Tunisia the distinction of having perfect records after two matchdays and should remain Group H leaders by beating Rwanda in Conakry. Ivory Coast are playing catch-up in the same section after a shock home loss to the Guineans and hope several Premier League players can help them overcome the Central African Republic.

Eric Bailey of Manchester United will

anchor the defence, Jean Michael Seri of Fulham is a midfield option, and Wilfried Zaha of Crystal Palace offers pace in attack. There are 48 fixtures spread over seven days, although doubts surround those between Ghana and Sierra Leone in Kumasi today and in Freetown next Monday. Sierra Leone, banned by FIFA from international competitions over government interference in the running of the sport, are racing against the clock to be reinstated.

## Sarri only interested in money, says Napoli owner

Milan: Napoli owner Aurelio De Laurentiis yesterday accused former coach Maurizio Sarri of only being interested in money and predicted that new manager Carlo Ancelotti was in for the long haul as the southerners chase a first Serie A title since 1990 and dream of Champions League success.

"I thought I had met a coach who would stay at Napoli for a long time," De Laurentiis said of Sarri. "At a certain point it became a question linked exclusively to money. Suddenly, it was established by the media that his contract must be adjusted. So what is the value of an agreement just signed? We had already gone from 700,000 euros (\$800,000) to 1.5mn euros."

"I also once heard him say that for his next contract, he wanted to get rich. Sarri's declarations of love for the city? I believed it, but then I wondered: 'What if he was using me as a bank?'"

Sarri, a former footballer who turned to a career in banking in London, Zurich, Frankfurt and Luxembourg, before returning to coaching, took over at Napoli in 2015. But the 59-year-old moved to Chelsea on a deal reported to be worth nearly \$6.6mn) during the summer after Napoli finished runners-up to Juventus despite a club record 91 points.

His job in the Stadio San Paolo was taken by former Chelsea and Paris Saint-Germain boss Ancelotti, who has won league titles in five of Europe's top leagues as well as the Champions League with AC Milan and Real Madrid.

"Ancelotti was a date written in the football universe as if fate had decided it," said film producer De Laurentiis, who rescued the club from bankruptcy in 2004. "It took five minutes to get an agreement. The quickest negotiation of my fifteen years of football."

Napoli are six points behind Juventus in Serie A this term, but are top of their group in the Champions League after a late Lorenzo Insigne winner over Liverpool a week ago. "With him, we have a human relationship. We discuss our mutual interests. And if I talk about football, he doesn't get offended," said De Laurentiis.

## QATAR PLAYERS GEAR UP FOR ECUADOR MATCH



Qatar's national team trained yesterday ahead of two international friendlies against Ecuador and Uzbekistan. Felix Sanchez's men host Ecuador tomorrow at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium and then fly to Tashkent for another international against Uzbekistan on October 16.



## FOCUS

# Wales coach Giggs plays down fears over Bale injury

AFP  
London

Ryan Giggs has played down fears over the fitness of Real Madrid forward Gareth Bale despite ruling the Wales forward out of today's friendly with Spain. Bale has been troubled by a groin injury in recent weeks and was forced off in the closing stages of Real's defeat at Alaves on Saturday.

But Wales boss Giggs is still hopeful that Bale will make the Nations League tie away to the Ireland on Tuesday, and predicted that he would be fit for Real's next game against Levante. "Gareth has got a little bit of muscle fatigue and he won't be involved against Spain," Giggs said.

"We don't want to take any risks and we are monitoring it every day. I would say he is 50-50 at the minute for the Ireland game. He feels good but we have



to weigh up the risk whether he can be part of the game on Tuesday."

Bale, the all-time topscorer for Wales, scored three goals in his first three league appearances for Real this season. But the injuries that have become a common theme of his stay in Spain soon struck again, and Giggs said Bale had been scanned in Madrid a

few weeks ago.

"We rescanned it and have done everything we can to get as much information," Giggs said at his pre-match press conference. "There was a little bit on both scans – but there's always something. We're treating the symptoms but it's nothing to worry about. Either way, I expect him to be fit for Madrid's next game."

Former Manchester United winger Giggs said Spain, under new boss Luis Enrique, would be tough opponents. Spain, who had a disappointing World Cup, beat England 2-1 in their Nations League opener last month before thumping Croatia 6-0.

"They've got a new manager and they were very impressive last month against both England and Croatia," Giggs said. "To score six goals against the World Cup finalists Croatia is something special and gives the chance for our lads to play against some of the best players in the world."

## BOTTOMLINE

# Top Belgian football clubs rocked by fraud, match-fixing probe

AFP  
Brussels

Police raids across Europe yesterday sent shockwaves through Belgium's top football league as prosecutors targeted the country's biggest clubs over alleged fraudulent transfers and match-fixing.

A total of 220 police officers carried out 44 house searches across Belgium and in France, Luxembourg, Cyprus,

Montenegro, Serbia and Macedonia, Belgian prosecutors said.

"A great number of persons have been deprived of their liberty and taken in for a thorough interrogation," said a statement from investigators. The arrests focused on well-known football agent Mogi Bayat, the former manager of Sporting Charleroi, who was arrested in his home on suspected links to crooked transfer deals.

Club Brugge coach Ivan Leko, whose team is playing in the Champions

League this season, was also arrested yesterday, a source close to the investigation said. The headquarters of Club Brugge, Standard Liege, Anderlecht and KRC Genk, the current leader of the Belgian Premier League, were searched in the operation, the source added.

At Standard Liege police seized contracts involving players Obbi Oulare, Michel Preudhomme and Dino Arslanagic that were all linked to Bayat. Club Brugge and Anderlecht said they will fully cooperate with the investi-

gation. "Club Brugge has nothing to hide," chairman Bart Verhaeghe said. Anderlecht "gives its full cooperation and makes no further comments", said spokesman David Steegen. The house searches outside Belgium were mainly connected to the suspect transfer schemes, said prosecutors.

Cypriot police said they arrested a 52-year-old foreigner on a European warrant in connection with the case. The offences were mainly committed in Belgium, but also in Cyprus and other

European countries between 2012 and 2018, said Cypriot police.

Legal procedures are now underway to extradite the man to Belgium and evidence collected will also be handed over to the Belgian authorities. Suspicion of match-fixing emerged during the fraud investigation, with a focus put on matches played in the 2017-18 season, prosecutors said.

The investigation started in late 2017 as a result of a report drawn up by the Sports Fraud Cell. That entity had

received a complaint from Westerlo football club, which currently plays in Belgium's lower division 1B, following a Kortrijk-Mouscron match in March 2017, club president Herman Wynants said. Mouscron won the match and remained in the top league, relegating Westerlo. According to media reports, Bayat had several players from Kortrijk and Mouscron in his client portfolio with another match involving Mouscron and Qatar-owned Eupen also under suspicion.

NFL

# Steelers wide receiver Brown faces two lawsuits

Reuters  
New York

**P**ittsburgh Steelers star wide receiver Antonio Brown is facing two lawsuits stemming from an alleged incident in April, according to multiple reports Tuesday.

The lawsuits are for "damages in excess of \$15,000," according to ESPN.

Brown is accused of yelling at security and throwing items from off the balcony of a South Florida apartment. The 30-year-old was allegedly upset over \$80,000 and a gun he reported missing. Brown accused building security of being behind the theft, according to police reports.

Brown was not charged following the incident, according to police.

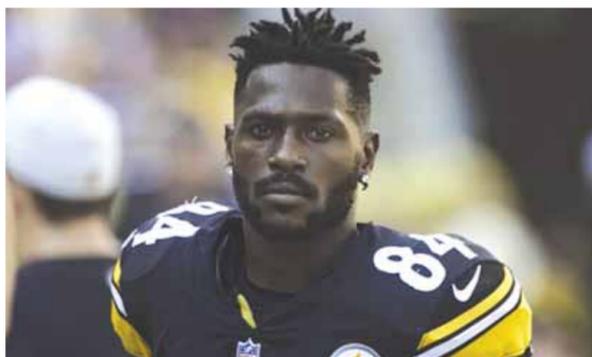
One of the lawsuits was filed by Ophir Sternberg, who alleges that his 22-month-old boy was emotionally traumatised after several of the items thrown during the alleged incident landed near the boy and his grandfather at the pool at The Mansions at Acqualina in Sunny Isle Beach, Fla.

The child was "severely traumatised by the incident, crying for hours on end the day it occurred and was unable to sleep that night," the lawsuit alleges, adding, "The falling objects included two very large vases, estimated to be over three feet each, as well as a large, heavy ottoman and other pieces of furniture."

The lawsuit adds police that responded to the alleged incident found Brown "extremely agitated."

"Mr. Brown's conduct was outrageous, goes beyond the bounds of decency, and is regarded as odious and utterly intolerable in civilized community," the lawsuit says. Brown is also being sued by the unit's landlord for damages and breaching the apartment agreement, according to reports.

"The apartment was in shambles," George A Minski, the lawyer representing the condo owner, said, according to ESPN. "Mirrors were smashed, tables were destroyed, there were holes and damages to the walls. Countertops were lifted off the deck. The unit is furnished with leather couches and love seats, and there were burn holes and black magic markers. It looked like



Pittsburgh Steelers' Antonio Brown.

they had rumbled. We tried to resolve it amicably and it got nowhere so we filed a lawsuit."

Minski said Brown had signed an apartment lease for three to six months and vacated the property not long after the incident, per ESPN.

A Steelers spokesman said Tuesday the organisation won't comment on

the situation. Brown, a six-time NFL Pro Bowler, has 35 catches for 373 yards and five touchdowns this season.

### TALIAFERRO, FIRST BLACK NFL DRAFT PICK, DIES AT 91

George Taliaferro, a three-time All-America running back at Indiana who became the first black player to be se-

lected in an NFL draft, died Monday night in Mason, Ohio, at the age of 91.

The Chicago Bears picked Taliaferro in the 13th round of the 1949 NFL Draft, but he decided to stick with his earlier decision to play for the Los Angeles Dons of the All-America Football Conference.

Mark Deal, an assistant athletic director for alumni relations at Indiana whose father Russ was Taliaferro's teammate with the Hoosiers, said the running back didn't think he had a chance to play in the NFL because of his race.

"The way George told the story," Deal told the *Chicago Tribune*, "he was eating dinner when someone came in and told him the Bears had drafted him. He said, 'That can't be right.'"

Hearing otherwise, Taliaferro decided he wanted to join the Bears, but his mother wouldn't allow it.

"She told him, 'You've already made a commitment to the Dons, you are going to play there,'" Deal said.

After one season with the Dons, Taliaferro joined the NFL in 1950, playing for the New York Yanks (1950-51), Dallas Texans (1952), Baltimore

Colts (1953-54) and Philadelphia Eagles (1955).

The three-time Pro Bowl player (1951-53) gained 2,266 rushing yards on 498 carries in his pro football career with 15 rushing touchdowns, 1,300 receiving yards and 12 touchdown catches.

Inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1981, Taliaferro helped lead Indiana in 1945 to the only undefeated season (9-0-1) in the history of the programme and its only outright Big Ten title.

On Twitter, Indianapolis Colts owner called Taliaferro "a trailblazer and true gentleman."

In a press release, Indiana University president Michael McRobbie added that Taliaferro "was a true trailblazer in every sense of the word and an individual of the greatest integrity, whose impact will be forever felt at IU and throughout the Hoosier state."

According to a statement from the school, Indiana football players will wear Taliaferro's No. 44 on their helmets on Saturday against Iowa. Flags will also be flown at half-staff on the Bloomington campus.

MLB

# Red Sox edge Yankees 4-3 to book playoff rematch with Astros

'I was just trying to throw strikes and attack these guys'



Boston Red Sox third baseman Eduardo Nunez (left), relief pitcher Craig Kimbrel and catcher Christian Vazquez celebrate beating the New York Yankees in game four of the 2018 ALDS playoff baseball series at Yankee Stadium. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

AFP  
New York

**C**hristian Vazquez smashed a home run and the Boston Red Sox held off a ninth-inning rally to beat the arch-rival New York Yankees 4-3 on Tuesday and advance in the Major League Baseball playoffs.

Boston grabbed a 4-0 lead but the Yankees scored twice in the ninth against Red Sox closing relief pitcher Craig Kimbrel, who enticed Gleyber Torres into a game-ending and series-deciding ground out that was upheld on video review.

"I was just saying to God he was out," said Boston's Rick Porcello, who threw five innings to get the victory. "I was just trying to throw strikes and attack these guys."

The Red Sox captured the best-of-five American League

division series three games to one, setting up a showdown with the defending champion Houston Astros in the best-of-seven American League Championship Series, a rematch of last year's ALCS.

"We're ready for another shot," Porcello said.

The Houston-Boston winner will advance to the World Series to play for the championship against the National League winner, either the Milwaukee Brewers or Los Angeles Dodgers. The Red Sox, who led the major leagues with 108 wins this year, are seeking their fourth title in 15 seasons and first since 2013.

The Astros, second in wins with 103, beat the Dodgers in last year's World Series and will try to become the first team to win back-to-back crowns since the Yankees took three in a row from 1998-2000.

The Yankees, coming off a

16-1 home thrashing one night earlier, fell behind quickly again, surrendering three runs in the third inning. Boston's Andrew Benintendi reached base after being hit by a pitch from New York starter CC Sabathia, took third on Steve Pearce's single to centerfield and scored the game's opening run on a sacrifice fly by JD Martinez.

Pearce took second on a ground out to Sabathia, went to third on a wild pitch by Sabathia and scored on Ian Kinsler's double off the left-field wall. Kinsler then scored on an Eduardo Nunez single to left for a 3-0 Boston lead.

The Red Sox were 11-0 this year against the Yankees in prior games they led by three runs and 85-5 in all games when going ahead by three.

Vazquez homered in the fourth for a 4-0 advantage but the host Yankees answered in the fifth, a Brett Gardner sac-

rifice fly out allowing Gary Sanchez to score from third to end the shutout bid.

Red Sox left-handed starter Chris Sale entered in the eighth as a reliever and retired the Yankees in order, but there was plenty of drama remaining.

In the ninth, Kimbrel walked Yankees leadoff hitter Aaron Judge, then surrendered a single to Didi Gregorius.

Kimbrel struck out Giancarlo Stanton and walked Luke Voit to load the bases and then hit Neil Walker to force in a run, pulling New York within 4-2.

Gary Sanchez followed with a sacrifice fly to left field to score Gregorius from third, but Torres grounded out to third base to end the game.

### GONZALEZ HOPING TO PLAY IN 2019

Veteran first baseman Adrian Gonzalez is hoping to return to the major leagues in 2019 for

what he envisions would be his final season.

"I'm definitely preparing to play next year and give it one last go," Gonzalez told *MLB Network Radio* on Tuesday. "Hopefully, I end up having a good year and I'm able to retire after that."

Gonzalez, 36, played 54 games with the New York Mets this season before being cut on June 11. He hit .237 with six home runs and 26 RBIs.

Gonzalez is a five-time All-Star, most recently in 2015 with the Los Angeles Dodgers. The No. 1 overall pick in the 2000 MLB Draft, he has played 15 major league seasons with teams including the Mets, Dodgers, Boston Red Sox, San Diego Padres and Texas Rangers.

Gonzalez is a career .287 hitter, with 317 home runs and 1,202 RBIs. He hasn't played more than 71 games in a season since 2016.

NBA

# Suns favour Jones for new GM role

Reuters  
New York

**T**wo days after firing their general manager, the Phoenix Suns are favouring a move to promote interim general manager James Jones to the franchise's permanent position, ESPN reported on Tuesday.

League sources told Adrian Wojnarowski that owner Robert Sarver is leaning toward handing the full-time GM job to Jones, a former player who is sharing supervision of basketball operations with assistant GM Trevor Bukstein after the team fired Ryan McDonough on Sunday night. The Suns announced the move on Monday, just nine days before they tip off their season on Oct. 17 against the Dallas Mavericks.

Jones had been serving as the Suns Vice President of Basketball Operations after being hired by Sarver last year.

According to Wojnarowski, "Sarver has left little, if any, doubt that Jones will be leading Phoenix's basketball operations into the future," according to league sources.

In the interim Jones is charged with oversight basketball operations and Bukstein will handle player transactions.

The McDonough firing, which raised eyebrows around the NBA after he had scored a contract extension last summer and presided over a series of offseason moves and draft selections, was the latest in a current of atypical management decisions from

Sarver. Last season, the Suns fired head coach Earl Watson six days into the regular season. On Nov. 7, 2017, Sarver signed off on the team's trade of disgruntled point guard Eric Bledsoe to the Milwaukee Bucks.

Jones played 14 seasons in the NBA, winning three NBA titles alongside LeBron James - two with the Miami Heat, one with the Cleveland Cavaliers. The sharpshooter knocked down 766 career 3-pointers in 709 games, averaging 5.2 points per game in playing for Indiana (2003-05), Phoenix (2005-07), Portland (2007-08), Miami (2008-14) and Cleveland (2014-17).

### ROCKETS' ZHOU SPRAINS KNEE IN PRE-SEASON GAME

Houston Rockets 7-foot-2 forward Zhou Qi left a home pre-season game against the Shanghai Sharks on Tuesday because of a left knee sprain.

Following a collision with Sharks forward Luis Scola near the end of the first quarter, Zhou left the court in a wheelchair after he was aided by trainers and other staff members.

The 22-year-old Zhou played only four minutes Tuesday night in his first pre-season appearance, registering two rebounds and one blocked shot.

He is in his second season with the Rockets, having averaged 1.2 points and 1.2 rebounds in 18 games in 2017-18.

Zhou was a second-round draft pick out of the Chinese Basketball Association in 2016, and he made his NBA debut on Oct. 21, 2017, with the Rockets.

### Brady: NFL now a 'more glorified college football'



Remember when college football and the pro game were two different animals?

**Tom Brady** does. But the New England Patriots quarterback, now 41, admits that today's NFL is growing more similar to the NCAA product and he thinks the league's recent rule changes in an effort to reduce injuries are a big reason for the resemblance. "I think now, in some ways, pro football is more glorified college football," Brady said Monday during his weekly interview on WEEI radio. "Maybe the transition is a more similar game than what it used to be when I first started."

The discussion was raised in advance of New England's anticipated matchup this weekend between Brady, drafted nearly two decades ago in 2000, against the 5-0 Kansas City Chiefs and quarterback phenom Patrick Mahomes, who has been lighting up the league in his first season as a starter. "I think football now, removing some of the

physical elements of the game, it's more of a space game, you see a lot of college plays more in the pro game than what I remember when I started. That's kind of how things have went over the last bunch of years." Mahomes has averaged over 300 passing yards per game this season with 14 touchdown passes and just two interceptions. A backup to Alex Smith last year as a rookie, Mahomes is one of many young passers enjoying the modern passing game benefiting from the NFL's stricter officiating mandates regarding contact by defensive players. By contrast, Brady threw 18 touchdown passes against 12 picks in his first season as a starter in 2001 - his second overall year - when he started 14 games while taking over from an injured Drew Bledsoe in New England. Brady averaged a mere 189.5 passing yards per game in 2001, the Patriots' first Super Bowl-winning season.



## SPOTLIGHT

## 'Get your own towels' - tennis rallies around ball kids

AFP  
Shanghai

Fernando Verdasco's treatment of a ball boy who failed to bring him his sweaty towel fast enough has thrust tennis players' attitudes towards the child volunteers into the spotlight, and could prompt changes.

The 34-year-old Spaniard has not commented on the incident, when he aggressively gesticulated at a ball boy to hurry up during last month's Shenzhen Open in China. The footage went viral on social media and saw Verdasco heavily criticised. Judy Murray, the former British Fed Cup captain and mother of three-time Grand Slam winner Andy, tweeted: "What about a rule that makes players get their own towels?"

Others, while condemning Verdasco's behaviour, pointed out that he is by no means the first tennis player to treat a ball kid harshly.

Last week at the China Open, the Belarusian Aryna Sabalenka

was caught in footage shaking an empty bottle in the apparent direction of a ball boy, before tossing it on the floor.

"I don't care how good a tennis player you are but this type of behaviour needs to STOP," tweeted Anne Keothavong, Britain's Fed Cup captain. At this week's Shanghai Masters, Roger Federer said tennis sets the standard for many sports when it comes to respectful behaviour - and that must extend to the treatment of ball boys and girls.

"The ball kids are really important to us because they are also maybe the future of our game, like I was," said the Swiss, a ball boy before going on to become a 20-time Grand Slam champion.

"You don't want to have them leaving with feeling, oh my God, I was not appreciated or I was not liked or it was a horrible thing."

But Federer, 37, the defending champion in Shanghai, pointed out that emotions run high in the heat of a match and that tennis is more intense now than in the past. In 2015 Novak Djokovic, now a 14-time Grand Slam win-



Serbia's Novak Djokovic using a towel during his men's singles first round match at the Shanghai Masters on Tuesday. (AFP)

ner, apologised to a Wimbledon ball girl after he screamed in her direction, leaving her looking shaken.

The Verdasco incident in particular highlighted the issue of ball kids being asked to handle sweaty and snotty towels for players, many of whom like to wipe their faces after each point.

Federer said that players are under pressure not to hold games, up so it is quicker for the ball boy

to hand them the towel rather than fetch it themselves. "The show's got to (keep) moving on. So all this stuff, it's quite hectic to be quite honest, even though it seems like we have a lot of time," he said. One solution is a towel rack at the back of the court.

That will be tested out at next month's Next Gen ATP Finals in Milan, which brings together the best players aged 21 and under.

World number one Rafael Nadal has spoken out, saying that he is not a fan because it will slow matches down. Kei Nishikori, Japan's world number 12, agrees.

"Maybe I don't prefer that one. Maybe that may take some time," he said. Federer, who said players often use their towel wipe-down to gather their thoughts between points, is happy to see the racks given a go, but has his reservations. If now you've got a hook or a rail in the back, I don't know, it's like are you wasting extra three seconds of time each and every point?

"Which doesn't sound like a lot, but you add that over a five-hour match, next thing you know, you saw much less tennis."

## Wimbledon to take firm line on treatment of ball boys and girls

Wimbledon is prepared to take action against players who behave badly towards ball boys and girls and plans to discuss the matter with representatives of men's and women's tennis, commercial director Mick Desmond said yesterday. The subject became a hot topic last week after Spaniard Fernando Verdasco was pilloried on social media for appearing to berate a ball boy for not bringing his towel quickly enough at the Shenzhen Open. Belarusian Aryna Sabalenka also drew online criticism for shaking an empty water bottle in the direction of a ball boy in Beijing last week before tossing it to the floor. Swiss tennis great and eight times Wimbledon winner Roger Federer, himself a ball boy in his youth, said on Tuesday that players needed to respect the kids, who are all unpaid volunteers at Wimbledon.

Desmond, speaking to reporters at the Leaders Sport Business Summit held at Chelsea's Stamford Bridge stadium, said Wimbledon expected mutual respect by everyone at the tournament, from players to cleaners. "We'll talk to the ATP (Association of Tennis Professionals) and the WTA (Women's Tennis Association) about behaviour," he added. "There is a code of ethics at Wimbledon, I think there is more respect shown because I think there's a sense of expectation of that. "But a ball boy or ball girl getting shouted out for not throwing a towel back... the players clearly know what's expected of them and what's not and Wimbledon is not afraid to fine players, whatever their standing." Desmond indicated, however, that Wimbledon was unlikely

to break with tradition and replace the kids with back of court towel racks for players to help themselves. Wimbledon winner Andy Murray's mother Judy asked on Twitter after the Verdasco incident: "What about a rule that makes players get their own towels? And the ball kids just look after the tennis balls." Next month's Next Gen ATP Finals in Milan, the season-ending tournament for the best Under-21 male players, plans to do just that with players instructed to use a towel rack "to remove the onus on ball kids to handle towels". "You never say never but I think there's still a sense to make sure that the match stays at speed, it's good to have that (service)," said Desmond. "But there needs to be mutual respect between the two entities."

## SHANGHAI MASTERS

## 'Very close': Federer makes shaky start to title defence

'Of course I feel pressure from the organisers, the fans, my team, myself, because I know that sometimes coming through a tough first round can be the key to what's to come afterwards'

AFP  
Shanghai

Roger Federer admitted that he came "very close" to defeat as he was given a huge scare before seeing off Daniil Medvedev 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 to open his Shanghai Masters defence yesterday.

The 37-year-old Swiss top seed faces Spain's unseeded Roberto Bautista Agut on Thursday in the last 16 after what was an unconvincing start against the Russian. The 20-time Grand Slam champion initially wasted little time stamping his mark on the tournament, breaking the 22nd-ranked Medvedev in the first game.

But Medvedev, 22, fresh from winning the Japan Open, broke back and enjoyed even more luck on Federer's serve in the second set to force a third.

In what was the first meeting between the pair, Federer broke in the ninth game of the decider to finally destroy Medvedev's resolve in just under two nail-biting hours.

"In the third set I really started to figure it out," said Federer, who was roared on by a band of fanatical fans decked out in red tops.

"How aggressive or how tactical I wanted to make the match, and by trying everything, I found a solution at the end."

Federer, who was uncharacteristically flustered at times, said he was pleased with his performance, but admitted it had been a nervy one.

"Of course I feel pressure from the tournament organisers, the fans, my team, myself, because I know that sometimes coming through a tough first round can be the key to what's to come afterwards," said the 2017 champion.

"Today was very close to maybe not getting that next step."

## DEL POTRO VIRUS

With the exception of injured world number one Rafael Nadal, Federer's chief rivals are all still in the mix.

Juan Martin del Potro and Alexander Zverev both defied illness to join Federer and Novak Djokovic in the next round.

Del Potro, the third seed, said that he is suffering from a virus and reviewing his health "hour by hour", after laboured past France's Richard Gasquet.



Roger Federer of Switzerland celebrates his victory against Daniil Medvedev of Russia during their Shanghai Masters match yesterday. (Reuters)

The Argentine lost Sunday's final of the China Open in Beijing to unseeded Nikoloz Basilashvili and afterwards revealed that he had been unwell. Three days on and the 30-year-old continues to be under the weather, but just about did enough to see off Gasquet 7-5, 7-6 (9/7).

Between coughs at his post-match press conference, Del Potro said: "It wasn't easy to play for me today, I did what I can. I didn't run too much."

"But I'm going like hour by hour and see how I'm feeling," added Del Potro, who plays 13th seed Borna Coric of Croatia next in Shanghai.

"I got lucky that I won, but tomorrow will be a different day. "If I have a good night today and I have a good recovery to-

morrow morning, maybe I will feel a little bit better for tomorrow night and play better than today."

The 21-year-old Zverev fought off a cold - he has had a sore throat and blocked nose for a few days - and the raw power of Basilashvili, winning 7-5, 6-4.

The fourth seed will play Australia's world-ranked 33 Alex de Minaur. Zverev said that Basilashvili, who is up to a career-high ranking of 23, "knows how to play, definitely".

"Probably the hardest-hitting player I have ever played against," said Zverev.

**PLISKOVA, SABALENKA POWER THROUGH IN TIANJIN**  
Top seed Karolina Pliskova bulldozed her way into the Tianjin

Open quarter-finals by beating Slovenian Polona Hercog 6-1, 6-2 yesterday as the Czech power-hitter eyes a place at the WTA Finals later this month.

Pliskova, currently holding eighth spot in the Race to Singapore standings, must reach the semi-finals in Tianjin to secure one of the three available qualifying places for the season-ending tournament starting on Oct. 21.

The world number seven's 50-minute win came after a powerful start and she claimed 80 percent of her first-serve points.

"I'm just happy that I didn't spend that much time on the court today and I can rest a little bit and prepare for my next match," Pliskova said.

Fellow Czech Barbora Krejckova or Briton Katie Boulter awaits Pliskova in the last eight. Fourth seed Aryna Sabalenka, who must lift the Tianjin trophy to maintain her slim chances of a WTA Finals debut, beat Poland's Magda Linette 6-1 6-3 to reach the last eight.

"I was thinking I need to win this tournament - but at the moment I don't care about Singapore," the Belarusian said. "At the moment I'm focused on each match."

Wuhan champion Sabalenka produced a string of powerful groundstrokes, giving her opponent no chance to find her rhythm.

The 20-year-old will face either Swiss Timea Bacsinszky or Japanese qualifier Misaki Doi in the quarter-finals.

## HONG KONG OPEN

## Muguruza shrugs off rain delay to make quarter-finals

AFP  
Hong Kong

Garbine Muguruza shrugged off a rain delay to sweep through to the quarter-finals of the Hong Kong Open yesterday in confident style.

The Spanish former Wimbledon and French Open champion brushed aside Romania's Ana Bogdan with the loss of only three games to underline her status as one of the tournament favourites.

Torrential downpours delayed the start of play by more than four hours and the world number 13 did not come out on court until 10.21pm, but said she had remained focused on the game during the extended build-up.

"It really was a long day, a long wait, at some point I thought I was maybe not going to play," said the relieved fourth seed, after winning 6-2, 6-1.

"I think you have to think you're going to play, the moment you think you're not going to play you relax too much and it's harder to connect."

Earlier, eighth seed Alize Cornet went down to Thailand's Luksika Kumkhum after a drama-filled clash which saw both players struggle to hold their serve.

The France world number 44 - who lost in a third-set tiebreak after almost three hours on court - said: "It was a crazy match, the scenario was turning around all the time, in the first set we couldn't keep

our serves, in the second we couldn't break."

Kristina Kucova, who caused an upset Monday after she knocked out Jelena Ostapenko, glided through her match with Viktoriya Tomova 6-1, 6-0.

"I'm very happy with the wins and it gives me a lot of confidence," Kucova said.

"It was very difficult because we were supposed to play at 3pm, and every half an hour the supervisor postponed it. We didn't know how long it would rain but it was the same conditions for both of us."

## 'A GOOD FUTURE'

China's leading ladies will be bidding to join Muguruza in the quarter-finals when they play today.

Wang Qiang, 26, and Zhang Shuai, 29, said confidence was now growing among Chinese players after a quiet spell since trailblazer Li Na, a two-time major-winner, retired in 2014.

The pair added that Li's shining example and the explosion of tournaments in China after her Grand Slam wins had triggered the emergence of a new generation of players.

Wang Qiang, ranked 24th, and 40th-placed Zhang head a list of four Chinese players in the current top 100, and there are 11 in the top 200 including 17-year-old US Open junior champion Wang Xiyu.

"Li Na has given us all a lot of hope," Zhang said.

"When she won the Grand Slams I think more people decided to try tennis and try to believe in themselves."

## Golf club vote could lead to Wimbledon expansion

Wimbledon could almost triple the size of its grounds if members of a local golf club vote to change their constitution today. The All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC) has made a 63.75 million pound (\$83.8 million) offer, according to British media reports, to buy out early the lease of neighbouring Wimbledon Park Golf Club. Wimbledon already owns the site but it does not revert to them until 2041. "We have a fantastic site but we would like to create a bigger site," Mick Desmond, the AELTC's commercial and media director, told reporters at the Leaders Sport Business Summit at Chelsea's Stamford Bridge ground.

"We believe we would become a much bigger, more prestigious event by getting that land but also giving something back to the community."

"There's a constitutional vote today. So effectively they have to change their constitution in order to then vote on the bid that's in front of them. We obviously think it's a very fair bid," he added. The Times newspaper said members, who pay a joining fee of 3,000 pounds and annual fees of up to 1,425 pounds, had each been offered an 85,000 pound cash settlement to seal the deal. It quoted AELTC chairman Philip Brook as saying in a letter to the 750 members that the offer was final and would not be improved. The move would add 73 acres (295,421 square metres) to the 42 acres currently used to host one of the pillars of the tennis calendar. The land could be used to build courts for qualifying matches. "We're going to get it anyway," said Desmond. "In 2041 it's going to come to us naturally because that's when the lease runs out. "So for us it's really buying a 20 year window."

Desmond said the AELTC kept a close eye on the expansion plans of other grand slams, notably the U.S. Open and France's Roland Garros, as well as other major sporting events. "We think this would be fantastic for the UK," he said.

"We set ourselves ambitions of always trying to raise the bar and I think we can do so much within our current configuration and we can go much further by having a broader configuration. If the bid's not accepted, then there are clear plans of what still needs to be done on the current site. But it may well change some of the configuration and some of the thinking around that," he added.

## Volleyball Super Cup



Defending champions Al Rayyan Club and Police will launch the new volleyball season with a Super Cup clash at the Qatar Volleyball Association Indoor Hall in Doha tomorrow. The match is scheduled at 6pm. The two teams had clashed in the last year's edition too with Al Rayyan winning the match and lifting the trophy for the first time in four editions. PICTURE: Othman Iraqi

## MOTORSPORT

# New all-female series aims to get women to F1

'An all-female series is essential to force greater female participation'

Reuters  
London

A new all-female racing series was launched yesterday, supported by former Grand Prix driver David Coulthard and top designer Adrian Newey, with the aim of helping women racers get to Formula One.

No woman has competed in Formula One since 1976 but organisers of the 'W Series' hope to provide a platform for them to develop skills before taking on the men further up the motorsport ladder.

With a planned start in May 2019, the series said it will offer a prize fund of \$1.5m and free entry for 18-20 competitors who will be selected purely on merit after tests and appraisals.

The overall winner will collect \$500,000, with prize money down to 18th place.

Organisers said they aimed to stage six 30 minute races at top circuits in Europe, most of which were past Formula One venues, with identical 1.8 litre Formula Three cars.

Future seasons would see the series expand to America, Asia and Australia.

"At the heart of W Series' DNA is the firm belief that women can compete equally with men in motorsport. However, an all-female series is essential in order to force greater female participation," organisers said in a statement.

Coulthard, winner of 13 Grands Prix between 1995 and 2003, is



Organisers said identical 1.8 litre Formula Three cars will be used.

on the advisory board along with Red Bull's technical head Newey and both will be involved in the driver training programme.

Former McLaren team manager Dave Ryan has been appointed racing director, while the chief executive is lawyer and corporate finance banker Catherine Bond Muir.

The idea of an all-female series is not new but has been controversial in the past, with top women racers adamant they want to compete against the men rather than be separated.

Spaniard Carmen Jorda caused a storm last year when she advocated such a series on the grounds that women had a physical disadvantage and could not compete equally with men at top level.

Claire Williams, deputy principal of the Williams Formula

One team, said this year that an all-female championship would be a "regressive step".

British racer Pippa Mann, a winner in the US Indy Lights series and who has competed six times in the Indianapolis 500, declared the latest move "a sad day for motorsport".

"Those with funding to help female racers are choosing to segregate them as opposed to supporting them," she said on Twitter yesterday.

"I am deeply disappointed to see such a historic step backwards take place in my lifetime."

Coulthard said, however, that women tended to reach a 'glass ceiling' at Formula Three level, often due to a lack of funding, and needed help.

Newey hoped W Series would create "a platform on which women drivers can improve by

racing one another and from which they may then springboard their careers forward and... ultimately race successfully in F1".

Some Formula One drivers, past and present, expressed support.

Damon Hill, the 1996 champion, saw "a great opportunity for female aspiring racing drivers" while Haas driver Kevin Magnussen hoped it would help progress their careers.

No woman has scored a point in Formula One, although Italian Lella Lombardi scored a half point in the shortened 1975 Spanish Grand Prix, and only two have started races since the championship began in 1950.

Lombardi started 12 races between 1974 and 1976. The last to attempt to enter a race was Italian Giovanna Amati, who failed to qualify in 1992.

## FOCUS

# Al Rayyan Stadium achieves prestigious GSAS sustainability certification



By Sports Reporter  
Doha

Al Rayyan Stadium's unique design has been confirmed as meeting mandated sustainability requirements under the Global Sustainability Assessment System (GSAS), which is administered in Qatar by the Gulf Organisation for Research & Development (GORD).

Commenting on the milestone, the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy's (SC) Al Rayyan Project Manager, Abdulla al-Fehani, said, "We are proud to receive the four-star GSAS rating for Al Rayyan Stadium's design. This major achievement demonstrates that we are delivering on our commitment to sustainability and green building."

The four-star design rating was awarded by letter of conformance. The final certificate will be awarded once the stadium has been constructed and undergone further inspections.

Engineer Bodour al-Meer, the SC's Sustainability & Environmental Manager, said, "The next step is to complete a series of five third-party audits to check the construction meets the design proposals."

"We look forward to this stadium following in the footsteps of Khalifa International Stadium, which was the first tournament venue anywhere in the world to receive GSAS certification."

Located approximately 20km west of Doha, the development of Al Rayyan Stadium is being overseen by joint venture main contractors Al Balagh Trading & Contracting Co. W.L.L. and Larsen & Toubro Limited.

Louis Berger is the construction supervision consultant, while AECOM is the project management consultant.

More than 5,000 people currently work at the stadium, which will host matches up to the quarter-finals stage in 2022.

Construction is advancing rapidly on-site, where installation of the roof modules has been completed. The steel for the roof and upper tier was delivered from China by Jing Gong Group, the company that is fabricating and installing the roof structure.

Post-2022, almost half of the stadium's 40,000 modular seats will be removed and given to football development projects abroad. The smaller post-tournament arena will enable popular QNB Stars League side Al Rayyan to maintain the intense passion its fans are famous for.

## SPOTLIGHT

# Meyer, Tuivaiti called up in 37-man Italy rugby squad

AFP  
Milan

South African-born Johan Meyer and New Zealander Jimmy Tuivaiti were called up by Italy rugby coach Conor O'Shea for the first time yesterday ahead of upcoming autumn international.

Uncapped flankers Meyer, 25, and Tuivaiti, 30, were named among Irishman O'Shea's 37-man squad for a training camp in Verona from October 21-24.

Italy take on Six Nations champions Ireland on November 3 in Chicago before play-

ing Georgia on November 10 in Florence, Australia on November 17 in Padua and New Zealand on November 24 in Rome.

Both Meyer and Tuivaiti play for Italian franchise Zebre, and were among 14 players from the team along with Giosue Zilocchi, Oliviero Fabiani, George Biagi, Tommaso Castello and Carlo Canna.

The line-up also includes 19 players from Pro14 side Benetton including Sebastian Negri, Alessandro Zanni and Tommaso Allan.

"We have selected a wider squad considering the challenges that await us this autumn and in view of the Rugby World Cup,

now less than a year away, and we hope that most of the athletes will have the opportunity to take the field," said O'Shea.

Captain Sergio Parisse, 34, has been named despite being ruled out for club side Stade Francais with a calf muscle problem.

The Italy injury list includes Matteo Minozzi, Leonardo Sarto, Angelo Esposito, Giovanni Licata, Maxime Mbanda and Federico Zani.

Luca Spriano, who has impressed for Edinburgh in the Celtic Pro14, has also been named after winning his first two caps in the 2017 Six Nations against France and Scotland.

## World Rugby backs Test shake-up: report

AFP  
Sydney

World Rugby has backed a proposal to dramatically revamp the Test calendar and introduce a "league of nations" competition featuring the sport's top 12 national teams, it was reported yesterday.

World Rugby boss Brett Gosper said the governing body supported the plan, which is

aimed at boosting revenues generated by the international game, provided it passed a feasibility study.

"It just makes sense and it would seem to be the time to do this and there's a consensus and a desire to try," Gosper told Sydney's *Daily Telegraph*. The plan would see a 12-team annual competition take place in non-World Cup years, with the top six teams from the northern and southern hemispheres all playing each other.

They would form a 12-nation league, with the top four teams entering an elimination phase to find an annual champion. The Rugby Championship (southern hemisphere) and the Six Nations (northern) would serve as the first leg of the competition. The second leg between northern and southern teams would take place in the existing July and November windows, replacing the three-Test tours that are now commonplace.

## SHOCK

# Thomas' Tour trophy stolen

AFP  
London

Geraint Thomas's Tour de France trophy has been stolen after being displayed at a cycle show, Team Sky said yesterday. Sky have been displaying all three Grand Tour trophies - which were won by Thomas and fellow British rider Chris Froome between September last year and July 2018 - at various events in Britain.

The trophies had been loaned to their bike supplier Pinarello for the Cycle Show, which was held in Birmingham over the last weekend in September.

Sky say the trophy was stolen after being momentarily left unattended

while the display was packed up at the end of the event. The matter is now the subject of a police investigation.

"It is incredibly unfortunate that this has happened," said Thomas. "It goes without saying that the trophy is of pretty limited value to whoever took it, but means a lot to me and to the team."

"Hopefully whoever took it will have the good grace to return it. A trophy is important, but clearly what matters most are the amazing memories from this incredible summer - and no one can ever take those away."

Richard Hemington, managing director of Pinarello UK said: "We are obviously devastated about this. We accept full responsibility and have personally apologised to Geraint. Obviously we all hope that the trophy can be recovered."

## CYCLING

# Pinot wins Milan-Turin

AFP  
Milan

Frenchman Thibaut Pinot (Groupama-FDJ) won the 99th edition of the Milan-Turin semi-classic yesterday after Colombian rival Miguel Angel Lopez (Astana) lost time in a crash in the race towards a summit finish.

The 28-year-old Pinot made a break two kilometres from the line after the 200km race through northern Italy.

An uphill crash at the front of the race with 1km to go caused chaos as Pinot's teammate David Gaudu collided with Lopez.

Pinot was unaffected and

rode on as Lopez remounted and chased hard behind. The French rider finished ten seconds ahead of Lopez with newly crowned world Champion Alejandro Valverde (Movistar) of Spain finishing at 28sec behind.

"To finally win an Italian Classic is important for me," said Pinot, who becomes the first French winner of the oldest classic race since Laurent Jalabert in 1997.

"I love this race. If it wasn't for this crash with 1km to go, it would have been a harder fight with Miguel Angel Lopez who was the man to beat today as much as Valverde. To beat the world champion here means a lot to me."

## UPDATE

# Driver who ran over Hayden given suspended jail term

DPA  
Rome

An Italian driver who last year fatally injured US motorbike champion Nicky Hayden in a road accident was yesterday handed a one-year suspended jail sentence.

Hayden, 35, died in hospital on May 22, 2017, five days after being run over by a car while riding a bicycle near the Italian beach town of Riccione.



The man at the wheel, a 31-year-old, was sentenced by a judge in nearby Rimini who also suspended his driving licence, the ANSA news agency said, without naming the driver.

The prosecution had asked for a slightly longer jail term of 14 months,

while defence lawyers asked for an acquittal, ANSA reported.

According to local paper Rimini Today, the trial established that the driver was speeding at the time of the accident, and that Hayden was run over at a junction where he had ignored a "stop" sign.

Hayden was known in motorsport as The Kentucky Kid. He won the MotoGP championship in 2006 and later competed for Honda in the Superbike category.

## EQUESTRIAN

# QREC to participate in Salon du Cheval in Morocco

The event is attended by high-profile Moroccan officials and has a sizeable opening ceremony every year



QREC's has had a stand at the previous editions of Salon du Cheval d'El Jadida, promoting its various activities.

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

The Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club (QREC) will participate in the 11th edition of the annual Salon du Cheval d'El Jadida, which will be held in Morocco between October 15 and 21.

This event is attended by high-profile Moroccan officials and has a sizeable opening ceremony every year.

The Salon du Cheval features various equestrian competitions and events, including a huge exhibition of all horse-related products, an Arabian horse show, an international show jumping championship, which is held as part of the Arab Show Jumping League qualifying for the annual Show Jumping World Cup, besides a display of numerous horse paintings, sculptures, etc.



Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club chairman Issa bin Mohamed al-Mohannadi.

Through its stand at the Salon, QREC promotes its various activities. These include the race meetings run at

Al Rayyan Racecourse and at the world's top racecourses every year, other events such as purebred Arabian horse shows, and Qatar's achievements and progress in this area.

The stand, further, features several sports, heritage and community-related activities, which attract the visitors throughout the days of the Salon.

Besides, the Salon hosts Moroccan heritage-related activities, including the 'Tbourida' show where riders line up and start running at the same time. Then, at a certain moment and by a signal from their leader, they all shoot their rifles in the air at the same time.

The name 'Tbourida' is derived from the Arabic word 'barouda' which means a 'rifle'. The Tbourida shows receive huge turnout throughout the days of the Salon. "The strategic relationships between Qatar and Morocco have motivated QREC, with the support of the Ministry of Cul-

ture and Sports, to participate in the Salon every year," QREC chairman Issa bin Mohamed al-Mohannadi said.

"We, in Qatar, are very interested to contribute to the success of the Salon, meet with the other participants and get to know all new developments in the equestrian world. In fact, this participation is in line with QREC's strategy in terms of international events and festivals where QREC takes part. We look forward to reflecting the strength of the Qatari-Moroccan relations."

QREC has participated in previous editions of the Salon du Cheval and has become a main participant at the annual event. QREC is working towards taking the 11th edition of the event to unprecedented level of success.

QREC will participate with a delegation in the Salon and interact with the thousands of visitors and students, who visit throughout the days of the Salon.

## FOCUS

## China's contingent to arrive in Doha today for World Gymnastics

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

The first delegation of athletes and officials to participate in the 48th Artistic Gymnastics World Championships 2018 will be arriving in Doha today, much ahead of the mega event to be held in the Middle East for the first time at the Aspire Dome from October 25 to November 3.

The gymnasts and officials of China are arriving early for a pre-tournament camp in order to get acclimatised to the venue. The gymnasts will begin practice from tomorrow. Meanwhile, 78 countries with over 600 gymnasts have confirmed participation for the World Championships Doha 2018.

The Organising Committee said this is the largest participation in terms of countries and athletes for a world championship. It said that few nations had to withdraw their teams as they faced some difficulties.

The Doha Worlds will also see six Arab nations - Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Jordan besides hosts Qatar - taking part. The world's top stars who will be seen in action in Doha include American star Simon Biles, three-time world all-round champion and the 2016 Olympic individual all-around, vault and floor gold medalist, and balance-beam bronze medalist; and Japan's Takuma Nishimura, who has won six consecutive

world championships.

The Organising Committee is making all efforts to make the Doha event of World Gymnastics an extraordinary one. "The Organising Committee is working intensely and with a desire to stage the championships in a stupendous manner that reflects Qatar's high organisational capabilities," said Anis Saoud, Deputy Director of the Competition Committee.

"We have the experience of hosting 11 world level gymnastics championships besides Asian and Arab Championships and that gives us the confidence. But the world championships is a big responsibility especially as we look forward to the best and consider what we have presented is a step towards further excellence," he added.

He noted that the Organising Committee is in constant touch with the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG). "Doha has recently received one of the FIG officials in order to contribute to the regulatory process and will also welcome the rest of the officials before the tournament is officially launched. About arrangements at the main venue at Aspire Dome, Saoud said, "The work is ongoing. The main hall will be set on the 17th of this month. The official training of the gymnasts will begin on October 20th." The official opening of Doha Worlds will be held on October 25 at 8:30am with delegations of all participating countries in attendance.



The gymnasium hall at the Aspire Dome is all decked up to host the 48th Artistic Gymnastics World Championships.

## YOUTH OLYMPICS

## Al-Haj to open Qatar's athletics campaign today

By Our Correspondent  
Doha

Ahmad al-Haj will open Qatar's athletics campaign at the Youth Olympics in Buenos Aires today. The 17-year-old will be competing in the Discus Throw. Al-Haj will be in action at 10:30pm Doha time today, and again in second round on Sunday at 8:15pm Doha time.

Al-Haj qualified for the Youth Olympics after topping the Asian qualifiers, where he hurled the discus at 61.28m. Other two athletes who will represent Qatar at Youth Olympics are Abdelaziz Mohamed in 200m and Owaab Barrow in 110m Hurdles. Both will be in action tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Mohamed Alqashouti failed to bring home

a medal in the equestrian team competition. Australasia, for whom Alqashouti represented, finished fifth. Team North America and Team Europe battled for the gold medal in a nail-biting jump off, while Team Africa settled for the bronze.

Victory was no easy feat, with both teams fighting and producing the three clear rounds, which would count towards their final score of 0. It was all down to the speed with which the five riders from each team tackled the jump-off course. Both teams showed tremendous calm under pressure, but at the end of the day Team North America made the difference with some very speedy and precise performances, relegating Team Europe into a very respectable second place. The individual competitions will be held on tomorrow and on Saturday.



Qatar's Ahmad al-Haj trains with his coach in Buenos Aires yesterday.

## FOOTBALL

## Second round of QSL Cup to be held today

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

The second round of QSL Cup matches will be played today and Saturday, with three games on each being played on each day.

Fixtures are scheduled during international breaks when the QNB Stars League is on break for international fixtures. The QSL Cup is also a great platform for clubs to unearth new talents and they give opportunities to as many Under-23 players as possible.



In today's Group A matches, Al Kharaitiyat will take on Al Arabi (5:35pm) at Al Arabi Stadium, Qatar SC face Umm Salal (5:35pm) at Qatar SC Stadium, while Al Duhail will lock horns with Al Gharafa (7:45pm) at Qatar SC Stadium.

On Saturday, it will be Al Ahli vs Al Saliya (5:35pm) at Qatar SC Stadium, Al Sadd vs Al Rayyan (5:35pm) at Al Duhail Stadium and Al Shahania vs Al Khor (7:45pm) at Al Arabi Stadium.

Al Duhail are leading the Group A standings with three points they collected from their 2-1 win over Al Kharaitiyat in the first round. Umm Salal also have three points from their 1-0 victory over Al Arabi and same goal difference (+1), but Al Duhail occupy the top spot having scored more number of goals. Qatar SC and Al Gharafa are third and fourth respectively with one point they each collected af-

ter playing out a 1-1 draw. Al Kharaitiyat and Al Arabi face off with both looking to open their account and that should add excitement to the game.

Al Sadd and Al Rayyan are the first and second-placed team respectively in Group B. And they lock horns each other in Saturday's first match that has a simultaneous kick-off with the Al Ahli vs Al Saliya fixture. Al Sadd had defeated Al Shahania 3-0, while Al Rayyan got the better of Al Ahli by the same margin in Round 1. The last match between Al Shahania and Al Khor is also sure to be fought keenly. Al Khor are third in the Group B.

## ITF West & Central Asian Regional Coaches Conference



The International Tennis Federation (ITF) West & Central Asian Regional Coaches Conference began yesterday at Al Dana Club. The opening ceremony was attended by Nasser bin Ghanim al-Khelaifi, president of Qatar Tennis federation (QTF). Asian Tennis Federation president Anil Khanna, Secretary-General of QTF Tareq Zainal and Conference Director Saad al-Mohannadi were also present on the occasion. In his speech, Khanna took the opportunity to highlight the role of QTF led by al-Khelaifi in supporting the game in the region. Over 130 coaches, including 70 from West and Central Asian countries and 55 from Qatar, are participating in the three-day conference.