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Hamilton still 'split' about team-ordered win in Russia



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Japan star Osaka says stellar run due to better focus

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GULF TIMES SPORT

FOOTBALL

'He's the best': Magical Messi rocks sloppy Spurs

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CHESS

Qatar's Zhu Chen elected FIDE treasurer

QNA
Batumi, Georgia

Former world champion Zhu Chen of Qatar has been elected treasurer of the World Chess Federation (FIDE), it was announced here yesterday.

Woman Grand Master Zhu was elected during the FIDE

elections held in the Georgian city of Batumi where the World Chess Olympiad is being held.

Russian Arkady Dvorkovich was elected new President of FIDE with a total of 103 votes against 78 votes for Greek Georgios Makropoulos.

Zhu expressed her happiness at winning the position and said she would work towards

developing the game and improving the finances of the international federation.

The Qatari thanked the Qatar Olympic Committee, the Ministry of Culture and Sports and the Qatar Chess Association for their support, saying her position will give Qatar a significant role in the development of chess.

Her husband, Qatar Chess

Association President Mohamed al-Medaihi, expressed his happiness at Zhu's election, saying it was a big honour for Qatar as well as the region.

Other elected officials are Bachar Kouatly, Deputy President; Sewa Anyonam Fumey, General Secretary; Mahir Mammedov, Vice President; and Julio Granda Zuniga, Vice President.



HORSE RACING

Qatar Arabian trophies to flag off Arc weekend today

Exciting race card at Saint-Cloud will prime the race-goers for this weekend's Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe meet

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Today before the racing action shifts to a newly-renovated Longchamp in Paris, Saint-Cloud, near the French capital, will serve up a taster, including Purebred Arabian racing, today.

Ten horses will line up for the Qatar Arabian Trophy des Poulains (Group 1 PA for three-year-old colts) at Saint-Cloud today, while nine entries remain for the Qatar Arabian Trophy des Pouliches (Group 1 PA for three-year-old fillies).

His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Thani-owned Marid and Neef will line up with Olivier Peslier and Pierre-Charles Boudot as their respective partners in the 2,000m race for the colts.

While Antoine de Watrigan-trained Marid won a Group 1 PA over the distance at Deauville on his last outing, it will be a step up for Didier Guillemin-schooled Neef, who had won a Group 3 at La Teste Buch over 1900m earlier in September.

Thomas Fourcy will have Al Shaqab Racing's Shalaa, who has run just once so far, in the race with talented Qatari jockey



Qatari jockey Faleh Bughanaim will ride Al Shaqab Racing's Shalaa in the Qatar Arabian Trophy des Poulains (Group 1 PA for three-year-old colts) at Saint-Cloud, France, today. PICTURES: Juhaim

Faleh Bughanaim partnering the Dahess colt.

Guillemin also has Deryan in the race, while Damien de Watrigan has two entries - Bel'izam and Sea Bird Al Maury.

Trainer Michal Borkowski has

Sahm Al Khalediah, who has three victories from last five outings including a Polish Group 1, in the card, while GT Zoetelief has supplemented Probat T, a 1300m sprint winner in

Netherlands.

In the 2000m race for fillies, Fourcy has decided to take Al Shaqab Racing's Gtnah out of the contention, while Borkowski has supplemented Awasef Al Khalediah.

The latter has two victories in Poland, including a Group 2 at Wroclaw over a mile from July, and will be making a debut in France today.

Fourcy still has another Al Shaqab Racing filly, Al Haffanah, to be helmed by Julien Auge, and Douhha Al Cham, to be ridden by Jerome Cabre, in the race. Al Haffanah has won her only outing in France, shedding her maiden status at La Teste Buch early August.

His Highness Sheikh Abdullah's Adiba, fourth behind Al Haffanah, won her second outing at Mont de Marsan earlier in September and will have Peslier for company. While it's a step up for wards of Fourcy and Guillemin, it should throw up some interesting action today.

Ali Hamad Al Attiya-owned Mashael will line up for E. Mikhailides under Aurelien Lemaitre.

The race is also a step up for Xavier Thomas-Demeaulte-trained Baseel, who has three victories from as many races, but none at the Group 1 level.

Qatari presence at Purebred Arabian Sales



Trainers and owners from Qatar take part in Arqana Purebred Arabian Sale at Saint-Cloud yesterday.



Al Wasmiyah Farm team at Saint-Cloud yesterday.



A horse on auction is taken around the ring during the Arqana Purebred Arabian Sale yesterday.



His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Khalifa al-Thani's Rajeh had won the 2017 edition of the Qatar Arabian Trophy des Poulains (Group 1 PA for three-year-old colts).

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

'He's the best': Magical Messi rocks sloppy Spurs

Messi's brace was just reward for an irresistible display from the Argentina legend

AFP
London

Mauricio Pochettino admitted Tottenham had only themselves to blame for Lionel Messi's mesmerising masterclass in Barcelona's 4-2 Champions League win at Wembley. Pochettino's side found it impossible to subdue Messi as Barcelona ended their three-match winless streak in emphatic style.

The Spanish champions punished a howler from Tottenham goalkeeper Hugo Lloris to take a second minute lead through Philippe Coutinho. Ivan Rakitic volleyed a stunning second goal for Barcelona before Harry Kane reduced the deficit after the break.

That set the stage for Messi to seize the spotlight once again as he netted twice either side of Erik Lamela's deflected effort for Tottenham. Messi's brace was just reward for an irresistible display from the Argentina legend.

Messi already has five goals in the Champions League this season after hitting a hat-trick against PSV Eindhoven in Barcelona's group opener. But Tottenham boss Pochettino claimed his side had made it easy on Messi with the error-prone start that forced them to throw players forward, leaving spaces at the back that the deadly Messi was able to exploit.

"Messi doesn't surprise me. We conceded the first goal and it is very difficult because that sets the game.

"We paid for that," Pochettino said. "We had to give spaces when we were looking for a result. What happens is players like him can finish you off. After 45 minutes we didn't concede one chance to Messi. Of course in the second half when it's 2-0 and you give more space, it's so difficult to stop this type of player.

"He is the best in the world. With a lot of space it is unbelievable how he runs and dribbles. In the second half he was decisive. He's got that capacity and hunger for scoring."

Pochettino was frustrated that Tottenham gifted the initiative to Barca so easily, but he took heart from the way they pushed their star-studded opponents harder in the second half. "Against a team that needed to win, to concede after two minutes, it destroyed the plan," Pochettino said.

"After making those mistakes, the first half was difficult for the team to be confident and play the way we planned.



Barcelona's Argentinian striker Lionel Messi celebrates after scoring against Tottenham Hotspur in the Champions League at Wembley Stadium in London. (AFP)

It's hard to assess the game. When you play a team like Barcelona you cannot afford to concede these type of chances. But for me, most important was the second half. We did everything to come back. We showed character and I'm so proud of the players."

Tottenham's hopes of qualifying for the last 16 from Group B are now in grave danger after two successive defeats. Having lost to Inter Milan and Barcelona, Pochettino knows Tottenham must win their next European fixture at PSV Eindhoven later in October. "We still need to play four games. We are going to have it in our hands to be in the next stage," he said. "Of course it will be tough because

now there are must-win games."

After three La Liga games without a win, including a shock loss to lowly Leganes, this was a morale-boosting success for Barcelona. Another setback would have added to the sudden sense of crisis around the club.

And relieved Barcelona boss Ernesto Valverde admitted he was pleased with his side's stylish response to their recent woes. "It's true that after a few bad results it was very important to do well today and we responded very well," he said. "We want to always dominate and we did. Our response was very strong and effective. It was a great game against a difficult team."

Valverde was especially impressed

with the way Barca stood up to late Tottenham pressure. "The game was very intense. When it was 3-2, Tottenham made it very difficult for us," he added. "We had a few problems in the game but we solved them and we just want to continue like this. I'm very happy with the players. Today's game was key for us."

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE RESULTS

Group A: At Dortmund, Germany: Borussia Dortmund (GER) 3 (Bruun Larsen 51, Alcacer 72, Reus 90+2) Monaco (FRA) 0; At Madrid: Atletico Madrid (ESP) 3 (Griezmann 28, 67, Koke 90+4) Club Brugge (BEL) 1 (Groeneveld 39)

Group B: At Eindhoven, Netherlands: PSV Eindhoven (NED) 1 (Rosario 27) Inter Milan (ITA) 2 (Nainggolan 44, Icardi 60); At London: Tottenham Hotspur (ENG) 2 (Kane 52, Lamela 66) Barcelona (ESP) 4 (Coutinho 2, Rakitic 28, Messi 56, 90)

Group C: At Paris: Paris Saint-Germain (FRA) 6 (Neymar 20, 22, 81, Cavani 37, Di Maria 41, Mbappe 70) Red Star Belgrade (SRB) 1 (Marin 74); At Naples, Italy: Napoli (ITA) 1 (Insigne 90) Liverpool (ENG) 0

Group D: At Moscow: Lokomotiv Moscow (RUS) 0 Schalke (GER) 1 (McKennie 88); At Porto, Portugal: FC Porto (POR) 1 (Marega 49) Galatasaray (TUR) 0

Nice coach Vieira sidelines misfiring Balotelli

Nice coach Patrick Vieira left misfiring striker Mario Balotelli out of his squad for a league visit to Toulouse today. Former Inter Milan and Manchester City striker Balotelli relaunched his stuttering career with the southern Ligue 1 side, to the extent it earned him a recall to the Italy squad. But the former bad boy of English football has yet to find the net this season. Asked why Balotelli was left out, former Arsenal defender Vieira replied: "Coach's decision." Vieira was appointed as Nice coach this season after his spell as New York City manager. Balotelli missed pre-season with Nice as his future with the club was unclear as he returned not fully fit.

Napoli charged by UEFA after fans set off flares

Napoli have been charged by UEFA after fans set off flares during the team's 1-0 win over Liverpool in the Champions League in Naples. Lorenzo Insigne's late winner sent Carlo Ancelotti's side top of Group C after two games, one point ahead of Paris Saint-Germain and Liverpool. But the Italian side were charged by European football's governing body for breaching disciplinary regulations, with fans allegedly setting off flares in the home end. Paris Saint-Germain have also been charged after fans set off flares and for crowd trouble in the game against Red Star Belgrade.

Mourinho should stay at Man United, says Giggs

Wales boss Ryan Giggs said that Jose Mourinho should remain as Manchester United manager despite the mounting crisis at the club. Mourinho is under increasing pressure at Old Trafford with United a lowly 10th in the Premier League and winless in four games in all competitions. Giggs, who played almost 700 games for United and was at Old Trafford on Tuesday for a 0-0 draw against Valencia in the Champions League. "I said that last time: where do they go?" Giggs said when asked about United at a press conference to announce his Wales squads for matches against Spain and Ireland.

Injured Costa misses out on Spain squad

Diego Costa was left out of the Spain squad announced by coach Luis Enrique yesterday, ahead of games against Wales and England. Costa sustained a thigh strain playing for Atletico Madrid against Club Brugge in the Champions League on Wednesday. Isco, Dani Carvajal, Inigo Martinez and Sergi Roberto are also injured. Wolves defender Jonny Otto, on loan from Atletico, received his first international call-up while there were returns to the squad for Real Betis defender Marc Bartra, Borussia Dortmund forward Paco Alcacer, who is on loan from Barcelona, and Atletico Madrid's Koke. Koke was not picked for the games against Croatia and Spain last month but has been in fine form for Atletico.

FOCUS

Napoli striker Milik robbed at gunpoint after Liverpool win



AFP
Naples, Italy

Napoli's Polish striker Arkadiusz Milik was robbed at gunpoint on his way home after his team's Champions League win over Liverpool, Italian police said yesterday.

The 24-year-old was in his car heading towards his home at Varcaturo on the Domitian Coast 20km west of Naples at around 2am when his car was stopped by a high-powered motorcycle blocking the road. The two assailants - whose faces were entirely covered by helmets - approached the footballer's car and pointed a gun at him, ordering

him to hand over his Rolex Daytona watch worth 7,000 euros.

The robbers then sped into the countryside towards Licola, police said according to the AGI news agency. As soon as he recovered from the shock, Milik went to the nearest police station to report the crime.

Attacks on professional players in the southern Italian city are frequent. Italian international Lorenzo Insigne was robbed of jewellery, cash and a luxury watch in 2016 and the club's Slovakian captain, Marek Hamsik, was held up at gunpoint in the centre of the city four years ago.

Napoli beat last year's Champions League finalists 1-0 with a 90th-minute Insigne goal to top of Group C.

SPOTLIGHT

No one to blame but ourselves, says Klopp

AFP
Naples, Italy

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said his side could only blame themselves after the last year's Champions League runners-up were overrun by Napoli before Lorenzo Insigne's late winner gave the Italians a 1-0 win to go top of Group C on Wednesday night.

"We were not good enough and if you are not good enough, you'll lose and that happened to us tonight. That's it," said Klopp. "Napoli made a really good game, we didn't, and that's why they deserve the three points."

Lorenzo Insigne scored after 90 minutes in a game Napoli dominated from the start with substitute Dries Mertens also rattling the crossbar. The hosts had the better chances throughout as Insigne, Jose Callejon, Fabian Ruiz and Arkadiusz Milik all threatened under-pressure Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson.

Napoli owner Aurelio De Laurentiis - who hired three-time Champions League winning coach Carlo Ancelotti this season in place of Maurizio Sarri - hailed the success at their Stadio San Paolo. "Big win against a great team! Ancelotti worthy of his fame," wrote De Laurentiis on Twitter.

Last season Napoli's style of football under Sarri impressed against Manchester City but the team lost 4-2 at home before exiting the competition in the group stage. Insigne's winner ensures they are top of Group C with four points, one more than Liverpool and Paris Saint-Germain.

"I think we timed it well," said former Chelsea and Real Madrid coach Ancelotti. "If Mertens had scored a few minutes earlier, it would've been more time suffering. We interpreted the game well. We had an extra central defender and were able to build the game from the back. There was a perfect balance."

Napoli needed a win on Wednesday



Napoli's Lorenzo Insigne (right) scores against Liverpool in the Champions League in Naples, Italy, on Wednesday night. (Reuters)

after their opening match ended 0-0 at Red Star Belgrade. Liverpool, meanwhile, played as if they would settle for a point after they beat Paris Saint-Germain 3-2.

The Reds' strike force of Roberto Firmino, Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane were a shadow of the trio who terrorised Europe last season, with Napoli goalkeeper David Ospina not called upon for a single save.

Liverpool's best effort came when Egyptian Salah shot wide after the break. "It's always a bad sign if you have to say your goalkeeper was your best player, but that was obvious tonight," said Klopp.

"The first half was kind of OK, but second half was not good enough. Obviously

no attempt on target (for us)... I don't remember when that happened last. I am really fine to give the credit to Napoli, but I think we had a big part in it as well."

Liverpool were also handicapped by an injury to Guinean midfielder Naby Keita inside the first 20 minutes. "We had prepared the match well," said Ancelotti, "then it's all about the performance and the guys played it well and we were rewarded with this victory that keeps us in the group. The team did well throughout the game, we never lost control, were always very focused, above all when defending and allowed Liverpool practically nothing."

Liverpool's Dutch midfielder Georginio

Wijnaldum said it was a "reality check" before next Sunday's Premier League top-of-the-table clash with Manchester City. "We have three days to recover and then we will face Man City," added German Klopp.

"It would have been difficult at any time in the season. Now, let's have a look afterwards, how the players are, what happened in the game, injury-wise, little knocks and stuff like that. Then we will prepare for Sunday. Then we have our crowd in the back. You could see tonight, Napoli used the atmosphere and we couldn't calm it down with our performance. But on Sunday that - at least - will be 100% different."

QNB STARS LEAGUE

Al Gharafa aim to end losing streak against Al Arabi

Gourcuff's men, who are in seventh spot, have suffered three successive defeats

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Gharafa coach Christian Gourcuff was confident his team can cut down on errors when they face Al Arabi today in the QNB Stars League. Al Gharafa are coming off after three successive defeats and are eager to turn it around.

Gourcuff's men had lost to Al Kharaitiyat 0-2 last week and are seventh in the standings with seven points from two wins and a draw. Gharafa are sorely missing the services of star Dutch attacking midfielder Wesley Sneijder, who is nursing a muscle strain, while Diego Amado is suspended.

Ahmed Alaaeldin is back in training, but is a doubtful starter for today's match. The good news was that goalkeeper Yousef Hassan has returned from his injury.

"We are suffering from the absences and it undoubtedly affects any team," said Gourcuff yesterday. "At the same time, it will give opportunities to other players, especially youngsters. We are trying to rectify the mistakes that we have made. We will definitely find solutions to them. All is well with the team despite some negative results and the management is very supportive of us. There is no problem with us off the field. Our problems are on the pitch," he added.

Al Gharafa have scored 12 goals in the season so far but have conceded 14, which has made things difficult so far. "We are in a difficult stage. We need to play with determination and make less mistakes. The onus is on our youngsters to grab the chances with both hands," Gourcuff said.

The Gharafa manager was still optimistic of finishing in the top four. "Our ambition is to be in the top four, but now, we aim to provide a good game to regain the confidence. We have to get into our style and fight our way back into the tournament," said Gourcuff.

Meanwhile, Al Arabi too are looking to be back to winning ways after they had suffered a defeat at the hands of Al Sailiya last week. Al Arabi are sixth in the points table with 12 points from four victories. Mailson de Farias and Mohammed El Neel will lead Al Arabi's challenge.

Arabi coach Luka Bonacic was hopeful



Al Gharafa coach Christian Gourcuff speaks during a press conference ahead of the Al Arabi match.

his team will overcome the disappointment of losing to Sailiya. "We will try to get back to winning ways with a victory against Al Gharafa. At the same time, Gharafa had lost in their last three games and will come hard at us. We must be wary of them," Bonacic said.

"We have to get back our winning mentality. We hope to put up our best. We must be prepared for all scenarios. I can make physical and tactical changes, but I cannot change the mentality of the players. We play one or two games very well, and then fare badly in one or two games," he added.

In the day's another match, Qatar SC will take on Al Kharaitiyat. Qatar SC are

on four points from one victory and a draw, while Al Kharaitiyat are 11th with three points.

But Kharaitiyat registered their first win against Gharafa 2-0 last week, to collect their first points. Striker Abdulhadi Amin scored both their goals. While Qatar SC were beaten 5-1 by A Sadd in the previous round.

Kharaitiyat coach Abdelaziz El Amri said his team was hungry for more victories. "The most important thing for us at the moment is to get more points. We were delighted with our first victory. More importantly, we could arrest the slump. The win against Al Gharafa was actually a lifeline for us after losing the

first six matches," he said.

"Now, we are against direct opponents as we face Qatar SC. They had problems in some games, but they cannot be written off. We didn't deserve to lose six games on the trot. Some of our defeats were accidental. We did not concede any goal for the first time and that itself was a good thing," El Amri added.

Qatar SC have only their upset win over Gharafa in the opening week and draw with Al Khor to show for their efforts. Cameroonian star Samuel Eto'o leads Qatar SC's charge. Al Kharaitiyat will mainly rely on Algerian attacking midfielder Jugurtha Hamroun and Abdulhadi Amin to deliver the goods.

EUROPA LEAGUE

Arsenal ease past Qarabag for eighth win in row

By Amy Lawrence
The Guardian

Qarabag on a Thursday night might not have been the kind of trip that players would be queuing up to take part in. Last season Arsene Wenger was in the habit of leaving his entire first XI at home for Europa League group games to conserve energy for Premier League assignments.

But Unai Emery sees each game - no matter where or against whom - as a stepping stone towards the improvement he craves. This latest win was notable for the fact three different players - Sokratis Papastathopoulos, Emile Smith Rowe and Matteo Guendouzi - collected a first goal for Arsenal to think about on the long journey home from Azerbaijan.

Eight consecutive wins, a steady start in the Europa League, a fraction outside the Premier League top four on goal difference, a new goalkeeper in Bernd Leno who looks full of smart saves, first senior goals for two different teenagers in Baku: what's not to like about Arsenal's fresh start under Emery at the moment?

Well, here's the bizarre rub. For all the positives, and there are plenty, there is still something inescapably incoherent about the way they are playing. They get going in fits and starts, but defensively they remain unconvincing enough to routinely gift their opposition a bunch of clear chances every match. Qarabag were not short of opportunities.

Arsenal took a fourth-minute lead as Guendouzi floated in a corner for Nacho Monreal to head goalwards. The ball skimmed off

Sokratis, who gladly if slightly inadvertently snaffled his first goal for the club.

There might have been more as Arsenal enjoyed space down the left side, with Alex Iwobi and Smith Rowe linking up well. At the other end, however, the back three was not an instant fix as Qarabag had their share of first-half chances.

Innocent Emeghara appealed for a penalty, gesticulating furiously by tugging at his shirt to suggest some guilt on the part of Rob Holding. But as the first half developed they gained the confidence to run at Arsenal in numbers. Mahir Madatov danced into the box to test Leno. The German made an excellent reflex save to beat away Filip Ozobic's fierce shot before half-time.

Emery reverted to a back four at the break, but that did not ease the defensive lapses and Qarabag found the net only for the celebrations to be curtailed by an offside flag.

The front players seized their opportunity, and it was a special moment for Smith Rowe to clip home his first senior goal for his boyhood club. Danny Welbeck won possession and the purposeful Iwobi moved play on expertly, delaying his pass to make it as easy as possible for the teenager to score.

Then, with 11 minutes to go Guendouzi showed clever feet to find the room to score his first goal across the keeper. The choice to bring such a strong substitute's bench ensured the win, and Qarabag ran out of legs once the likes of Mesut Ozil, Alexandre Lacazette and Lucas Torreira came on. Now to pick it up again, after a long journey and brief recovery, for the midday kickoff on Sunday at Fulham.



Arsenal's Emile Smith Rowe scores against Qarabag in the Europa League in Baku, Azerbaijan, yesterday. (Reuters)

SPOTLIGHT

Southgate rewarded for WC run with new contract

AFP
London

Gareth Southgate has been rewarded for guiding England to this year's World Cup semi-finals with a new contract, the Football Association (FA) announced yesterday. The 48-year-old's new deal will see him through to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar and see his pay rise to a reported £3m (\$3.9m) per year.

"I am delighted to have the opportunity to lead the national team through the next two major tournaments," said Southgate, whose previous deal was due to expire after the Euro 2020 finals. "The job remains an incredible privilege and a true honour. Experiencing at first hand how the nation united behind the team this summer was something special and it will be great to see how far this young squad can go in the years to come."

Southgate, who ultimately saw Eng-



land beaten 2-1 by Croatia in their first World Cup semi-final since 1990, said he was fortunate to have a great back-up team - his assistant Steve Holland was

also awarded a new contract, and the players performing on the pitch.

"I must acknowledge the hard work and commitment of my staff and the players over the last two years," said Southgate. "I have learned a great deal from them and their passion and professionalism in representing England has been an inspiration to my own work."

DORTMUND TEENAGER SANCHO GETS ENGLAND SQUAD CALL

Borussia Dortmund teenager Jadon Sancho was a surprise selection as Southgate named a 25-man squad for this month's Nations League matches away to Croatia and Spain.

Mason Mount and James Maddison were also given their first senior England call-ups by Southgate. The 18-year-old Sancho was called up having already played in the Champions League for German club Dortmund, with Mount rewarded for some strong displays at English second-tier club Derby after joining

on loan from Premier League giants Chelsea.

Maddison was selected after a fine start with Leicester in the Premier League this term after signing for the Foxes from Norwich. Southgate insisted he had no qualms in selecting youngsters for international duty.

Harry Winks, capped once by England, was recalled after starting for Tottenham against Barcelona in the Champions League on Wednesday, while Chelsea's Ross Barkley could win his first cap since a friendly against Australia in May 2016.

Injuries have led Southgate to make changes to World Cup semi-finalists England's squad. Dele Alli has been sidelined by a hamstring problem, while fitness doubts have seen the likes of Fabian Delph, Adam Lallana and Jesse Lingard omitted.

England, second in group A4 of the Nations League, face third-placed Croatia in Rijeka on Friday 12 October before playing leaders Spain in Seville three days later.

FOCUS

France coach Deschamps unfazed by mounting Pogba-Mourinho feud



AFP
Paris

France coach Didier Deschamps insisted yesterday he was not concerned by escalating tensions between Paul Pogba and Manchester United boss Jose Mourinho after he named his latest squad ahead of games against Iceland and Germany. Pogba told reporters he was "not allowed" to talk as he passed through the post-match mixed zone interview area following United's 0-0 draw with Valencia in the Champions League on Tuesday. It was the latest episode in an increasingly tense atmos-

phere at the club, where a growing rift between Pogba and Mourinho saw the France international stripped of the vice-captaincy last week.

"I'm not worried at all. I'm definitely not Jose Mourinho and I'm not going to meddle in their relationship," Deschamps said. "Everything is clear with Paul. He knows each time why he's here and what I expect from him."

United are languishing down in 10th place in the Premier League after seven matches, and suffered a shock defeat by second-tier Derby County in the League Cup last week. Pogba, a key member of France's World Cup-winning side in Russia, also appeared to get under Mourinho's skin after their re-

cent draw with Wolves by saying United should attack more.

"There's what's happening at their clubs but that doesn't just depend on them," said Deschamps. "You can't separate individual performance from a team performance with certain clubs who can go through a spell where results aren't as good. That goes for all the players. You have to take that into consideration, but the set-up is different when they join us in the France squad."

NDOMBELE GETS FIRST FRANCE CALL-UP AS SAKHO RETURNS

Meanwhile, midfielder Tanguy Ndombele's impressive ascension

through the French football ranks was rewarded with a first call-up for France as the World Cup winners prepare for games against Iceland and Germany.

Deschamps also recalled Crystal Palace's Mamadou Sakho, following his two-year absence from the squad, as he struggles with injuries in defence with both Samuel Umtiti and Adil Rami among the players sidelined.

France play Iceland in a friendly on October 11 and then Germany in the Nations League five days later, matches in which Ndombele will be hoping to claim some game time after stepping in for the injured Bayern Munich star Corentin Tolisso.

The 21-year-old midfielder was still

with then-second division side Amiens just over a year ago. In the time since he has joined Ligue 1 giants Lyon, has had a taste of both the Europa League and Champions League and now has a chance to stake a claim for a place in the France team.

Deschamps largely kept faith with the squad that secured France's second World Cup title in Moscow, his only changes due to injuries. Everton centre-back Kurt Zouma, 23, is called up due to the absences of Umtiti and Rami. He has two caps already having played against Denmark, twice.

Zouma's Everton teammate Lucas Digne is recalled after Benjamin Mendy suffered a foot injury.

F1

Hamilton still 'split' about team-ordered victory in Russia

Mercedes had ordered Bottas to allow Hamilton to pass in Sochi

AFP
Suzuka, Japan

Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton said yesterday he still had mixed feelings after being gift-wrapped a controversial win by Mercedes in Russia last weekend.

The runaway championship leader stretched his advantage to Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel to 50 points with just five races left this season after Mercedes ordered Valtteri Bottas to allow Hamilton to pass, sacrificing a rare victory for the Finn.

"I don't think you get your mind around it," said Hamilton. "I am definitely split, just like all people have split opinions about it," added the Briton. "But it's happened, it's done and dusted. You have to accept it and move forwards."

The decision by Mercedes to allow Hamilton to claim his eighth win of the season sparked fresh debate over team orders in Formula One, with many fans of the sport taking to social media to vent their anger.

Vettel called the move a "no-brainer" after finishing third in Sochi but Hamilton's 70th Formula One victory left Mercedes squirming with embarrassment. After the race, Hamilton described it as "the strangest day" of his career and he was clearly still torn after arriving in Japan. "But collectively as a team we've stayed quite united through the whole experience," he said.

Bottas was left fuming in Russia but the Finn was in a more charitable mood yesterday. "I just need to accept it now that I'm in this situation because of everything that has happened earlier in the season," he said. "I cannot fight for the championship anymore, Lewis is. I'm a team player and I'm willing to help."

Bottas insisted that he would not have to wait for Hamilton to wrap up his fifth Formula One title before being allowed to take the chequered flag. "I'm definitely still allowed to win but it will all depend on the situation," he shrugged.

"I feel like a winner. Honestly I think last weekend, if Lewis didn't have the (tyre) blister, if he didn't have that much pressure from Sebastian, the team would have



Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton holds a baby during an autograph session at the Suzuka circuit yesterday, on the eve of the Formula One Japanese Grand Prix. (AFP)

not done it. It will really be case by case."

Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff said he was "happy to be the baddie" in order to strengthen Hamilton's grip on the world championship. And former world champion Fernando Alonso backed the Austrian's decision yesterday.

"All the bad stuff people are saying

about Mercedes is just jealousy," said the Spaniard. "For them, what people say goes in one ear and out the other. They're not doing anything wrong."

Hamilton paid tribute to Bottas, pointing to the outpouring of love shown to his teammate on a visit to the Mercedes factory in Brackley, England, earlier this

week. "I was at the factory on Monday and I am sure 50% of the guys have the same vibe, but generally the support was quite amazing and also the respect for Valtteri," he said. "We all did a toast to Valtteri - 900 people or whatever it is were standing there, it was pretty awesome!"

FOCUS

Vettel denies Ferrari have 'lost direction'

AFP
Suzuka, Japan

Sebastian Vettel has rejected the suggestion Ferrari have lost their way after being dealt a hammer blow by Lewis Hamilton in the Formula One title race.

The German, who has watched Hamilton win five of the last six races, attempted to put a positive spin on a poor run of form following his third-place finish behind the two Mercedes in Russia last weekend.

"We haven't lost direction," a defiant Vettel said yesterday ahead of the Japanese Grand Prix. "We have made progress - the steps that were planned were the steps that came. Maybe they have made bigger or smaller steps, but we are where we wanted to be," added Vettel, who trails Hamilton by 50 points with just five races left this season. "We have a strong car, but I don't think that we had a dominant car at any point this year. At too many races, we haven't been close enough."

Vettel also went on the defensive when asked if this week's Suzuka race was make-or-break in terms of his waning hopes of pipping Hamilton to a fifth world title. "I don't like the now or never approach," sniffed Vettel.

"I don't think there's much sense in that. I didn't know it was five out of six," he added, referring to Hamilton's run of victories. "Now I know, so the secret has been not to count. You attack

every weekend - every weekend is different, the track is different, the circumstances are different. This is my favourite track in the world, so I'd better enjoy it and not spoil it by starting to count the things that are against me."

Vettel, who like Hamilton has won four times in Japan, remains upbeat despite the Briton's controversial victory in Sochi, where Mercedes ordered Valtteri Bottas to allow Hamilton to pass. "In race pace we were a bit closer," said Vettel. "You can't change much in a week, let's hope the track suits us more."

But the German, who has won five races to Hamilton's eight this year, gave a withering assessment of coming off second-best to his fierce rival. "I'm sure he had more fun last weekend than I had," said Vettel, a four-time Formula One champion with Red Bull from 2010 to 2013.

"It's tough to have a wheel-to-wheel battle and it's been intense, but I didn't enjoy it as much as he did. Naturally you enjoy it more when you come out on top. Hopefully this week we are a bit closer."

Vettel had an even fruitier reaction on the subject of DRS (drag reduction system) in Formula One - and whether Suzuka should have more than just one zone where drivers can push the go-faster button.

"I'm not a fan," he shrugged. "It's artificial. Now we are in Japan, I think Mario Kart, if you remember - it might be more fun to throw bananas out of the cockpit. Maybe it's a better idea."



Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel gestures during a press conference ahead of the Japanese Grand Prix in Suzuka, Japan, yesterday. (Reuters)

SPOTLIGHT

Lorenzo declared fit to race in Thai MotoGP but still in pain

AFP
Buriram, Thailand

Jorge Lorenzo was yesterday declared fit to race in Thailand's inaugural MotoGP after suffering a foot injury, despite the Ducati driver still feeling the effects of a crash in Aragon last month.

The 31-year-old Spaniard dislocated his toe at Turn One of the Aragon Grand Prix, a crash which undid his hard work to seal pole position. He blamed compatriot and world champion Marc Marquez, who went on to win the race and inch closer to his fifth MotoGP world title. Marquez is 72 points ahead of second-place rider Andrea Dovizioso, while Lorenzo is in fourth.

In a tweet yesterday MotoGP said Lorenzo was "declared fit" for the weekend's racing at the Chang International Circuit in Buriram. But Lorenzo, a three-time championship winner, was still using crutches yesterday to keep the pressure off his damaged foot.

"I am positive... Hopefully I will jump into ride tomorrow and I will have enough power," he told reporters of his chances of competing in Thailand, a day before the start of practice sessions.

Marquez called his compatriot on Monday to discuss his condition but was coy on what was said between the pair, who will be stablemates next year at Repsol Honda. "I speak with him (only)," Marquez told reporters.

Thailand is hosting the MotoGP for the first time, a big win for a country with hopes of one day luring the Formula One. Preparations were in full swing yesterday, as the sleepy town of



Ducati Team's Spanish rider Jorge Lorenzo walks using crutches in the paddock area at Buriram Circuit in Buriram, Thailand. (AFP)

Buriram in northeastern Thailand revs up for its biggest sporting event.

Rows of tents also lined the outside of the track in fields to provide extra lodging for the more than 100,000 people expected to descend on the town for Sunday's race. Fans making the five-hour drive up from Bangkok passed by rice paddies and grazing water buffaloes, a landscape common to Thailand's rural northeast.

The event will take on a local twist with a special exhibi-

tion of Muay Thai, the country's traditional martial art. Riders have not been on the track since February, and some have said the weather is a cause for concern at the tail-end of Thailand's rainy season, which leaves open the possibility of slick and humid conditions.

"It's very very hot, and it can rain every day," Yamaha's Valentino Rossi said. "We hope first of all for a dry race." With the exception of a brief downfall yesterday afternoon, the weather was clear but slightly cloudy.

Canadian group led by Stroll paid \$117mn for Force India

London: Racing Point, a consortium led by Canadian billionaire Lawrence Stroll, paid 90mn pounds (\$117mn) to take over Formula One racing team Force India in August, an administrators report shows. The report also revealed the parlous finances of the Vijay Mallya-owned team at the time they were taken into administration last July.

The Silverstone-based team had only 240,000 pounds in its account on July 27 while outstanding gross wages due to be paid at the end of that month totalled 2.2mn pounds. The estimated funding requirement for August, including staff

salaries, was 9.6mn with "no meaningful income" forecast to be received.

Santander had frozen the company's bank accounts on July 25. FRP said engine providers Mercedes were owed 13.7mn pounds while representatives of Mexican driver Sergio Perez were demanding payment of \$4.1mn. Supplier Formtech was also owed 2.3mn pounds. Indian businessman Mallya, who is London-based and fighting an extradition request from authorities in India, previously owned 42.5% of the team with a similar shareholding in the hands of India's Sahara Group.

Indian banks seeking to recover about \$1.4bn in loans made to Mallya's defunct Kingfisher Airlines obtained an order freezing shares in the team's holding company last November. FRP said sponsor BWT provided an immediate unsecured loan of five mn pounds to ensure July wages were paid, a sum repaid by a further 15mn loan from Stroll's Racing Point following an exclusivity agreement on Aug. 7. The administrators received more than 20 expressions of interest in the team, and had needed to move fast given the financial situation and approaches to key members of staff from rivals.

BOTTOMLINE

'Not a man's world': MotoGP riders praise female superbike champ

AFP
Buriram, Thailand

The world's top-ranked MotoGP riders hailed yesterday the barrier-breaking victory of Ana Carrasco, a week after the Spaniard earned glory by becoming the first woman to win a world motorcycling title.

The 21-year-old entered the record books on September 30 when she won by a single point in the Superbike Supersport 300 division on the French circuit of Magny-Cours. Riding a Kawasaki, Carrasco fought her way up from 25th to finish 13th at the season decider, calling her achievement "unbelievable".

MotoGP's three leading riders were full of praise when quizzed about her win ahead of the inaugural Thailand Grand Prix. "I was very happy, it was so important for the motorcycle world," said MotoGP frontrunner and fellow Spanish rider Marc Marquez. "It's not a man's world, women can be very fast on the bike. It's not only about the physical condition, also it's about skill and mentality," added Marquez.

His sentiments were shared by Italians

Andrea Dovizioso and Valentino Rossi, who both trail Marquez on points going into Sunday's race. Dovizioso called it an "important result" while Rossi said it was a "great achievement" that could inspire other women.

"I hope that for Ana it is good for the future of her career," Rossi said. "Maybe this result can push some other girl to race." When pressed if she could compete at the MotoGP level, Rossi said it was a big leap but that the difference had nothing to do with gender. "For me from the 300 (division) to the MotoGP is still a long way," he said.

The riders also fielded questions about the hot weather and the new track, which was built only a few years ago in Buriram, a sleepy Thai town that is pouring investment into sports. The Chang International Circuit is the only Formula One grade track in the country.

It will be put to the test this weekend for its first hosting of the MotoGP, the 15th leg in this year's 19-race motorcycling season. More than 100,000 people are expected to attend, straining the resources of rural Buriram, where tents have been pitched near the track after hotels quickly booked out.



The 21-year-old Ana Carrasco entered the record books on September 30 when she won by a single point in the Superbike Supersport 300 division on the French circuit of Magny-Cours.

FOCUS

Durant lobbies for NBA's return to Seattle

Reuters
New York

Kevin Durant hasn't forgotten where he began his NBA career, and that is providing a special feeling for today's preseason game in Seattle.

The Golden State Warriors star would also like to see an NBA franchise return to the Pacific Northwest city.

"Most definitely. It's a basketball city. It's a sports town," Durant told ESPN in advance of today's game against the Sacramento Kings.

"The brand of basketball in Seattle - just from how many NBA players they have in the NBA - they have a good representation of basketball in the NBA from Seattle-born players, Washington state-born players.

"And I feel like that whole brand deserves an NBA team. Just like the Golden State War-

riors deserve a team or the Los Angeles Lakers deserve a team, Seattle is that same way. A team has that same type of impact in the community. So (we have) a lot of time in life before this whole thing is over, and I'm sure we'll see a team before it's time."

Durant was the second overall pick in the 2007 NBA Draft and played one season with the Seattle SuperSonics before the franchise departed for Oklahoma City. He averaged 20.3 points and was named NBA Rookie of the Year.

He said he enjoyed his season in Seattle and often wonders how things would have worked out if the team didn't relocate.

"I had no control over it," Durant said.

"Obviously, I look back on it and picture what it would have been like to live there and play there, but I had no control. I spent some great, great years in Oklahoma City, and that path was perfect for me.

"But I still got a connection

with the Northwest area, always going up there with Nike in Portland, making trips to Seattle here and there, just knowing that I'm always going to be a Sonic. I think no matter what jersey I put on, I think those fans know that."

Warriors coach Steve Kerr didn't like it when the SuperSonics were allowed to move and thinks it is a travesty that the NBA hasn't yet returned to town.

"I think it's a real shame - just the fact that the Sonics don't exist," Kerr told reporters.

"It's one of the franchises in this league to me that not only makes sense and feels like the NBA... I think it's a real black mark on the NBA, and I'm hoping that the Sonics will be back at some point in the near future."

The city of Seattle is on the verge of receiving an NHL expansion franchise, and a new arena plan has been hatched that may elevate the chances of getting a new NBA franchise.

But for now, today's game at KeyArena represents the first time an NBA game will be played in the city since the departure of the SuperSonics.

The 30-year-old Durant has remained popular among Seattle sports fans and is expected to receive a thunderous ovation.

"It means a lot," Durant said of playing in Seattle at last week's team media day.

"It means a lot. I spent a season there, and the fans were amazing to me my first year there. It was very devastating how we up and left in the middle of the night, and I know those fans have been yearning for basketball for a long, long time.

"Even though it's just a preseason game and it's one game, hopefully we can give them a nice little show for the night. But I'm looking forward to going back and playing in front of that crowd again, and I know my teammates are going to be excited as well. The energy is going to be amazing in the building."



Golden State Warriors star Kevin Durant.

MLB

Judge and Stanton power Yankees past A's in wild-card game

'Obviously we're very familiar with them. We know how good they are. I mean, we know we have to play our best if we're going to have a chance to beat them'



New York Yankees right fielder Aaron Judge (right) and left fielder Giancarlo Stanton celebrate during the sixth inning against the Oakland Athletics in the 2018 American League wild card playoff game at Yankee Stadium. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

Reuters

Aaron Judge hit a two-run home run in the first inning, and Giancarlo Stanton later added his first career postseason homer as the New York Yankees advanced to the American League Division Series on Wednesday night with a 7-2, wild-card game victory over the Oakland Athletics at raucous Yankee Stadium.

The Yankees will face the Red Sox beginning Friday in Boston. It will be the first postseason meeting between the longtime rivals since the 2004 AL Championship Series, when the Red Sox became the first team to overcome a three-games-to-none deficit en route to their first World Championship since 1918.

"Obviously we're very familiar with them," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said of the Red Sox. "We know how good they are. I mean, we know we have to play our best if we're going to have a chance to beat them."

The Yankees never trailed thanks to Judge, who hit a 2-1 fastball from Liam Hendriks (0-1) into the left field bleachers. Judge's 427-foot blast, his fifth postseason homer, stood up thanks to the ability of New York's pitching to escape occasional trouble.

"It's frustrating," A's manager Bob Melvin said.

"They got off to a good start with the home run, and they ended up adding on. We just didn't do enough offensively tonight."

Yankees starter Luis Severino allowed two hits in four-plus

innings while working around four walks. He escaped a bases-loaded jam in the fourth by fanning Marcus Semien but was lifted after allowing singles to Jonathan Lucroy and Nick Martini to open the fifth.

"I think that was the plan, go four or five good innings and after that the bullpen is going to go do their job," Severino said. "And when I went into the first inning, that was the mindset. I went there and got my job done."

Dellin Betances (1-0) struck out major league home run leader Khris Davis on an 88 mph cutter to end the fifth and then struck out Stephen Piscotty and Ramon Laureano in a flawless sixth.

After Betances finished his outing, the Yankees added four runs in the sixth off Fernando

Rodney and Blake Treinen.

Judge opened the inning with a double down the right field line and scored on a double by Aaron Hicks. After Stanton walked to end Rodney's outing, Luke Voit capped a nine-pitch at-bat against Treinen by ripping a triple off the right field fence to make it 5-0.

Voit made it 6-0 with a nice slide on a sacrifice fly by Didi Gregorius, and the crowd began chanting "We Want Boston."

Davis hit a two-run homer off Zach Britton with one out in the eighth. Britton walked Piscotty with two outs but ended the threat by inducing a ground-out from Laureano on the next pitch. Stanton opened the bottom half of the frame with a long drive off Treinen over the left field foul pole to make it 7-2.

The A's dropped their fourth

straight winner-take-all game, ending a 97-win season with their second loss in as many tries in the wild-card game. Oakland batters struck out 13 times and finished 3-for-17 with runners on base.

"I told them all in all, it was a great season," Melvin said of his team.

"I was proud of them and hopefully this is just the start for us. So we feel like with the group that we have here together that we're going to get better each and every year, and unfortunately it's disappointing right now but to keep their heads up."

Instead of using a traditional starting pitcher, the A's employed the "opener" strategy by utilizing Hendriks.

The right-hander allowed two runs in the first inning while throwing 25 pitches.

NBA

Nowitzki sidelined to start 21st season

Reuters
Dallas

The start of Dirk Nowitzki's 21st season with the Dallas Mavericks will be delayed by a left foot injury.

Nowitzki had offseason surgery on his left ankle, which has recovered. Now, tendons in the foot are causing pain.

"Those tendons didn't even get used for five or six years because of the bone spurs," Nowitzki told the *Dallas Morning News* in China, where the Mavericks are playing two exhibition games this week. "Now they're moving around and that's causing the soreness. The actual surgery area is fine."

Nowitzki took part in a scrimmage with teammates last month, but his foot and ankle swelled. He hasn't been on the court since Sept. 21.

The 40-year-old forward said he'll be out the rest of the preseason, but coach Rick Carlisle wasn't as optimistic.

"He won't do anything on this trip," Carlisle said. "I can't give you any kind of a soft timeline. It's weeks, not days, as far as getting on the court for live action."

"He is making gradual progress. We're just not at a point where we can talk about a hard timeline."

Once the inflammation goes away, Nowitzki won't need a lot of prep time before he can play, Carlisle said.

"I have to think that once we got him feeling significantly better, there wouldn't have to be a lot of full live workouts to get him in a game."

The unquestioned leader of the Mavericks for years, Nowitzki is expected to come off the bench this season. Newly acquired DeAndre Jordan has been pencilled in as the starting center, with rookie first-round draft pick Luka Doncic at power forward.

Jordan is not with the team in China, missing the trip to due unspecified personal reasons. Forward Harrison Barnes also stayed back as he battles a hamstring injury sustained in practice.

Nowitzki has played in 1,471 career games, starting all but 31. Last season, he appeared in 77 games for the Mavericks and averaged 12.0 points - the lowest in his career since his rookie season in 1998-99.

A four-time first-team All-NBA selection, Nowitzki is a 13-time All-Star and won the 2006-07 Most Valuable Player award. His 31,187 career points are the most among active NBA players - LeBron James is just behind him with 31,038 - and sixth all-time.



LeBron, Warriors top key rankings in GMs survey

LeBron James is tipped to win the NBA's MVP award in his first season with the Los Angeles Lakers while the Golden State Warriors are favourites to clinch a third consecutive championship, the league's annual survey of general managers revealed on Wednesday. While James has cautioned that it will take time to transform the Lakers into a team capable of challenging for silverware, the 33-year-old remains the most popular pick to win MVP amongst the league's 30 general managers. James, who made his Staples Center debut for the Lakers in a pre-season game on Tuesday, was the pick of 30% of GMs while Golden State's Kevin Durant polled second with 27%. The Warriors meanwhile remain the overwhelming favourites to win a fourth title in five seasons. Eighty-seven percent of GMs backed the Oakland outfit to

retain their title, with the Boston Celtics and Houston Rockets earning seven percent each. The Celtics are most executives' favourites to face the Warriors in the NBA Finals, with 90% ranking Boston as the best team in the Eastern Conference. James meanwhile was also given high marks for his overall ability, topping the rankings as the most versatile player and the player with the best "basketball IQ". The Milwaukee Bucks' Giannis Antetokounmpo was tipped as the most sought-after player, with 30% of managers saying he would be the top choice if they were attempting to build a franchise. New Orleans' Anthony Davis was second with 23%. The survey was based on answers to 49 different questions about teams, players, coaches and fans, with general managers not allowed to vote for their own team or personnel.

FOCUS

Broncos get up close look at QB Darnold, Jets

Reuters
New York

With a slight twist of fate, **Sam Darnold** might have been a Denver Bronco instead of a New York Jet.

The Jets traded up from No. 6 to No. 3 in the draft order on March 17, about three weeks before the Broncos hosted Darnold on a pre-draft visit.

"It was awesome," Darnold recalled of his trip to Denver.

"It was cool to be able to meet those guys, and especially to meet John Elway and kind of understand his perspective on football and life, what he dealt with as a rookie.

"...Talked some ball and was able to throw it in front of them as well."

Broncos head coach Vance Joseph liked what he saw.

"At the workout, the things he can do physically were really impressive," Joseph said Wednesday. "You watch him play now, he's doing those same things. He can make big plays down the field."

Darnold, of course, went to the Jets at No. 3 before the Broncos passed on a quarterback entirely, and reports afterward said Darnold was the only QB Denver

would have considered at No. 5. More than five months later, Joseph remains wary of the rookie's high ceiling.

"Obviously, he's a young guy, so he's made some mistakes, but he can go hot and cold," Joseph said. "If he's hot, it's going to be a problem."

Broncos cornerback Chris Harris Jr. praised Darnold's ability to extend plays, comparing him to Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes, whose fourth-quarter heroics dropped Denver to 2-2 on Monday night. But Harris also has seen ways to exploit the rookie, as Jacksonville did last week in sending the Jets to 1-3.

"The Jaguars dropped about three picks last week, so that's something," Harris said. "I definitely noticed that. He's going to force it in there....That's one thing you like from a rookie."

Both teams could use a pick-me-up, as the Jets have lost three in a row and the Broncos two.

"As a team, I feel like we are really close, and for me personally I feel like I'm just on the edge," said Darnold, who has thrown two touchdowns and four interceptions since tallying two TDs and one pick in Week 1.

Case Keenum, meanwhile, has totalled six interceptions this season, one more than Darnold and one off the NFL lead

(Derek Carr). Since throwing three touchdowns in Week 1, he hasn't found the end zone through the air, though he did have a rushing TD in Week 2.

"I don't care how we get into the end zone," Keenum said. "Obviously, I like throwing touchdowns. I like when those guys are running them in, too."

Rookie running backs Philip Lindsay and Royce Freeman have combined to score five times - three on the ground for Freeman, and one rushing and one receiving for Lindsay.

The duo has been extremely efficient, as Lindsay ranks third (5.9) and Freeman ninth (5.0) in yards per carry among qualified leaders. "They run the ball very well," Jets coach Todd Bowles said. "They've got two explosive backs."

The Jets' defense ranks seventh in yards per carry allowed (3.8), though it has allowed four scores on the ground this year. On a short week, the Broncos are a bit nicked up.

Right tackle Jared Veldheer (knee), defensive end Adam Gotsis (knee), linebacker Todd Davis (shoulder) and punter Marquette King (thigh) missed Wednesday's practice due to injury. The Jets enter much healthier, with only tight end Neal Sterling (concussion) and wideout Charone Peake (hamstring) sitting out.



NFL

Rams, Goff take aim at depleted Seahawks

'I feel pretty comfortable with the fact that I know I've got the trust coming from my teammates'

Reuters
New York

This isn't the week the Seattle Seahawks would have chosen to begin the post-Legion of Boom era.

When the Seahawks (2-2) play host to the Los Angeles Rams (4-0) on Sunday afternoon at CenturyLink Field, they'll be without the last remaining member of their famed secondary, free safety Earl Thomas.

He suffered a broken left tibia in last weekend's victory at Arizona. And they'll be facing a Rams offense that leads the league in total offense (468.5 yards per game) and ranks second in both passing offense (343.3 yards) and points (35.0 ppg).

In Thomas' place this week stands Tedric Thompson, a fourth-round pick in 2017 out of Colorado who has played just 66 defensive snaps in his NFL career. Thompson, who will be making his first start, understands the new guy wears a bulls-eye in the NFL. He expects the Rams will test him early and often.

"I expect everything," Thompson told *The Seattle Times*.

"I feel pretty comfortable with the fact that I know I've got the trust coming from my teammates."

With K.J. Wright out with a knee injury, fellow linebacker Bobby Wagner is the only remaining member of the Seahawks' defense that beat Denver in the 2014 Super Bowl that takes the field with Seattle on Sunday.

"I think scheme-wise it doesn't change," Wagner said of the defense without Thomas, a six-time Pro Bowl selection.

"I think it's more so just the player.... Earl's a different guy. His range through the field is something off the charts, so that is different. We're extremely confident in T-2, Tedric Thomp-



Los Angeles Rams' quarterback Jared Goff.

son."

The Seahawks also will be without linebacker Mychal Kendricks, indefinitely suspended by the NFL this week after he pleaded guilty to a felony insider trading charge in August.

Second-year pro Austin Calitro, an unsigned free agent out of Villanova, will make his second career start in Kendricks' place.

"We are going to have to do a

really nice job in general to slow (the Rams) down," Seahawks head coach Pete Carroll said.

The Rams got a couple of extra days to prepare after playing in the Thursday night game last week, a 38-31 victory against Minnesota.

Quarterback Jared Goff was named the NFC Offensive Player of the Week after completing 26 of 33 passes for 465 yards and

five touchdowns. That gave Goff a perfect 158.3 passer rating for the night and he leads the league in that category.

"No moment is too big for him," Rams head coach Sean McVay said of Goff.

"And I think when your quarterback demonstrates that, you feel like you're in good hands. Certainly, he has done an outstanding job, really, this first

quarter of the season."

The Rams, who won 42-7 in Seattle late last season to wrest the NFC West title away from the Seahawks, expect inside linebacker Mark Barron to make his season debut after recovering from an ankle injury.

Los Angeles released Sam Ficken and signed kicker Cairo Santos to fill in for the injured Greg Zuerlein (groin).

SPOTLIGHT

UK Sport announces plans to host decade of sporting events

Reuters
London

UK Sport said on Wednesday that holding the 2030 World Cup in Britain would be a "crowning achievement" to bookend a decade of sport that includes plans to host the Ryder Cup, the world athletics championships and the grand depart of the three major cycling tours.

British Prime Minister Theresa May earlier this week gave her backing to a potential World Cup bid, which is currently the subject of feasibility studies from the English Football Association. UK Sport, the country's governing sporting body, published a list of 54 "mega" and "major" events it said it would be interested in hosting over the next 15 years to showcase Britain to the world.

These also included the women's Rugby World Cup as well as the men's edition, which was hosted in England and Wales in 2015, and the multi-sport European championships, hosted in part this year by the city of Glasgow. A plethora of sporting events are already scheduled to be hosted in Britain over the next few years, with the Cricket World Cup, golf's Solheim Cup and the World Road Cycling Championships, among others, set to take place next year.

"The biggest target on this list is the football World Cup," UK Sport Chief Operating Officer Simon Morton told reporters at Lord's cricket ground when asked to assess which events would constitute a successful programme. "If we bid for that event, landing (it) would be the crowning achievement on this, almost irrespective of what we've got. I think (securing) a couple of the Grand Tours that we've talked about (would be a success)."

England, which hosted and won the 1966 World Cup, failed in bids to host the event in 2006 and 2018 with the latter costing a reported 18mn pounds (\$23.4mn). UK Sport's Head of Major Events Esther Britten said

it was right to be more cautious this time around.

"Any FIFA World Cup bid needs to be an alliance between the associations and the government. It is significantly expensive, so it needs to be a partnership between both," Britten said. Such a cost could be offset by the 2bn pounds that UK Sport said the programme of events has the potential to generate in economic impact as well as the possibility of attracting more than Britain held its first world athletics championships last year in London and there is a strong desire to host it again with the event having broken attendance records.

"I would love to see the world athletics championships return, personally," Morton said. "I think that event is undervalued, the sport has had some challenges but it is a truly global sporting event and good value for money for the country."

Morton was not daunted by the potential impact that Britain's exit from the European Union next year could have on any bidding plans for sports events. "We're trying to see it as an opportunity, fundamentally, which is about how does the rest of the world see us," he said. "Really huge sporting moments can really shift the dial on that sort of stuff... so a lot of what sits behind this list is to think about how we can use Brexit as an opportunity."

With France having just staged golf's Ryder Cup, the next available opportunity to host the biennial event would be 2026 or 2030. Morton said that a planned course in Bolton, England could be the venue for either year. There are ambitions to host the grand depart of the cycling tours a lot sooner, with the country hoping to capitalise on the fact that all three titles are held by British riders - Chris Froome (Giro d'Italia), Geraint Thomas (Tour de France) and Simon Yates (Vuelta a Espana).

Wales could host the Giro, while English county Yorkshire, which hosted the grand depart of the Tour de France in 2014, was being looked at as a destination for the Vuelta, Morton added.

Ducks pull away for opening win over Sharks

Brandon Montour, Adam Henrique and Carter Rowney scored third-period goals, and John Gibson made 31 saves to lead the visiting Anaheim Ducks to a 5-2 victory over San Jose in the season opener for both teams on Wednesday night. The result spoiled the Sharks debut of defenseman Erik Karlsson. Rickard Rakell scored a goal and had two assists, and rookie left winger Max Comtois also scored a goal for Anaheim, which won despite being outshot 33-15. Jakob Silfverberg finished with three assists, and Ryan Getzlaf added two assists for the Ducks. Henrique also had two points. Evander Kane and Tomas Hertl

each scored goals for San Jose. Martin Jones stopped just 10 of the 14 shots he faced. Karlsson, a two-time Norris Trophy winner obtained in a trade with the Ottawa Senators on Sept. 13, was paired with Marc-Edouard Vlasic. He played 26:48 and attempted one shot to go along with one hit and two blocks. Anaheim, swept by the Sharks in four games in the first round of last season's Western Conference playoffs, needed just 49 seconds to take a 1-0 lead. The 19-year-old Comtois, a second-round pick in the 2017 draft, scored on the first shot of his NHL career after Henrique poke-checked the puck from center ice to him at the blue line near the right boards.

Comtois then came in on a breakaway and fired a left wrist shot through Jones' pads. It was the sixth-fastest goal to open an NHL career in modern-era history and the fastest since Oct. 5, 1989, when Alexander Mogilny scored 20 seconds into his first game. Kane tied it seven minutes later when he picked up the puck along the left boards and made a nifty move, sliding the puck through the legs of defenseman Josh Manson before firing a wrist shot from the left faceoff dot through Gibson's pads. San Jose took a 2-1 lead at the 17:14 mark of the second period on a short-handed goal by Hertl. He stole the puck at center ice, spun

around and slid the puck through the legs of Cam Fowler and then beat Gibson with a wrist shot past his glove side. Anaheim came right back to tie it 46 seconds later on a power-play goal by Rakell, who roofed a crossing pass through the crease from Silfverberg into the left side of the goal. Montour then scored what proved to be the game-winner at the 8:02 mark of the third period. His fluttering backhand from the left side of the net went over the blocker of Jones and under the crossbar. Henrique doubled the lead two minutes later, and Rowney added an empty-net goal in the last minute.



Carter Rowney (No 24) of Anaheim Ducks and Evander Kane of the San Jose Sharks go for the puck at SAP Center in San Jose, California. (Getty Images/AFP)

GOLF

Mickelson back in action as US PGA Tour begins

AFP
San Francisco

With Europe's Ryder Cup celebrations still in full swing and Americans dissecting a devastating defeat, the US PGA Tour officially launches its 2018-19 season this week at the Safeway Open in Napa, California.

The world's best – including most who duelled in Europe's 17.5-10.5 triumph over the United States in the Ryder Cup in France last week – are still taking time off after the rigours of the US tour's FedEx Cup playoffs in August and September.

Phil Mickelson is the only Ryder Cup player to make the trip to California, and Patrick Cantlay

joins Mickelson as the only players who were in the Tour Championship field to tee it up this week.

Mickelson will be hoping a return to his home state signals a turnaround after an 0-2 performance at the Ryder Cup.

Mickelson will play the first two rounds alongside two-time defending champion Brendan Steele and 2014 champion Bae Sang-moon of South Korea.

Steele is seeking to become the first player to win the same US PGA Tour event three years in a row since Steve Stricker won the John Deere Classic from 2009-2011.

"Obviously very comfortable getting back here," Steele told reporters at Silverado Resort and Spa. "I've seen this place in a lot of different conditions and it

just seems to fit my eye no matter what's going on and where my game is coming into the week.

"It always brings out the best in me for some reason, so it's nice to be back."

Steele is coming off a three-week break, having failed to make it to the Tour Championship.

After his promising start to last season he finished on a down note, missing four cuts in his last five starts.

"I do love the fresh start here, being back to zero," he said. "Whether you've had a good year or a bad year, there's something really exciting about everybody starting from scratch again."

The string of events before the game's biggest names launch their seasons – many at the Tournament of Champions in January – opens the door for a

bevy of Web.com Tour graduates eager to cement their status on the main tour.

Long-hitting Cameron Champ, 23, is among 21 US PGA Tour rookies this season, all of whom will be in action this week.

"I'm just going to try to go about it the same as I did last year," said Champ, who impressed as an amateur at the 2017 US Open. "(I'll) just kind of figure out what kind of works best for me out here and the courses and whatnot, and then at the end of the day just play my own game."

Also among the rookies aiming to get out of the blocks quickly are 2018 Web.com Tour money list leader Im Sun-jae of South Korea and Aussie Cameron Davis, winner of the 2017 Australian Open.

Golf fan struck by ball at Dunhill Links

London: A woman was injured when she was hit by a wayward shot from defending champion Tyrrell Hatton at the Alfred Dunhill Links Championship on Thursday, less than a week after a spectator was blinded in one eye at the Ryder Cup.

The woman was bleeding from a head wound after the incident, on the 15th hole at Kingsbarns, one of the three courses in Scotland used for the pro-am event.

She was treated on the course by paramedics before being taken by buggy to the medical centre on site.

Frenchwoman Corine Remande suffered a serious eye injury after being struck by a shot from American Brooks Koepka during last Friday's opening day of the Ryder Cup at Le Golf National, near Paris. She told AFP on Monday at a hospital in the

French city of Lyon that the loss of sight in her right eye had been confirmed and that she had suffered a fractured eye socket and damaged eyeball.

Koepka, who is also playing in Scotland this week, said he was heartbroken after learning of the extent of the injury at the Ryder Cup.

"Yesterday was probably one of the worst days of my life," Koepka said in his pre-tournament press conference on Wednesday. "I haven't had too many tragedies in my personal family where there's been a loss or any kind of tragic accident so I've been lucky in that sense."

"I wasn't told until I got to the course – I'm not the biggest person on social media – so when I got here and had about seven missed calls and 25 text messages I was like, 'What's going on?'. Then I was told the news and obviously I am really heartbroken. My stomach sank."

TENNIS

Japan star Osaka says stellar run due to better focus

She is showcasing the ruthlessness that saw her beat Williams in the US Open final

AFP
Beijing

Her chopstick skills might not be the best but Naomi Osaka says an improvement in her focus is behind a run of success that culminated in winning the US Open.

The 20-year-old, who stunned Serena Williams to win her maiden Grand Slam last month, was devastating against 10th seed Julia Goerges of Germany yesterday, winning 6-1, 6-2 in 65 minutes to speed into the China Open quarter-finals.

Osaka, the eighth seed in Beijing, similarly thrashed unseeded American Danielle Collins 6-1, 6-0 in the previous round and is showcasing the ruthlessness that saw her beat Williams in a controversial New York final.

The Japanese will face home hope Zhang Shuai in the last eight in the Chinese capital today after Zhang pulled off a shock in defeating three-time Grand Slam champion Angelique Kerber.

China Open organisers have had the players competing in a "chopstick challenge" and Zhang and the German Kerber are currently winning.

Told that she was well behind both with her score, Osaka joked: "We're not talking about that."

"Come on, with Shuai, let's face it... But the thing is, I hold chopsticks in a weird way anyways." Turning more serious, the world number six, said: "On the court I have to think 'focus' because it's not something that's natural to me."

"It's something that I've been working on throughout this whole year and I think it finally clicked, or at least it's

more consistent."

Osaka, who appears increasingly at ease with the media, joking and chatting freely, said that she had also brought more consistency to her game.

"Not so many unforced errors (compared to a year ago). I'm not sure how many I hit today, but sometimes last year I think I was hitting a lot."

Osaka, who has won 24 of her last 28 games, meets unseeded Zhang next after the Chinese world number 45 emerged from a see-saw battle with third seed Kerber.

Zhang, 29, grabbed the first set 6-1, before reigning Wimbledon champion Kerber fought back to win the second 6-2.

Zhang stepped up a gear in the decider, taking the set with a comprehensive 6-0 to thrill the home crowd.

Kerber said that she had been troubled by a problem with her right knee, but refused to blame that for the defeat.

"I was not feeling the best at the beginning of the match, but then I was playing better and better," said the 30-year-old.

Meanwhile, Alexander Zverev smashed his racquet in frustration after he was the victim of a surprise three-set defeat to world number 61 Malek Jaziri at the China Open.

With his coach Ivan Lendl looking on stony-faced, the German prodigy exited in the last 16 in Beijing, the indefatigable Tunisian Jaziri winning 7-6 (7/4), 2-6, 6-4.

Zverev, 21, the second seed touted as a future multiple Grand Slam winner, reacted by whacking his racquet on the floor, bending it badly out of shape.

He then dished out more punishment, flinging it at his court-



Naomi Osaka of Japan serves during her third round match against Julia Goerges of Germany at the China Open tennis tournament in Beijing.

INTERNATIONAL CROWN

Korea off to flying start in Incheon

Reuters
Seoul

Hosts South Korea got off to the perfect start in the LPGA's International Crown team competition yesterday, winning both their matches against Taiwan, while defending champions the United States split the points with Sweden.

The four-day biennial event, which is being held at the Jack Nicklaus Golf Club Korea in Incheon, west of Seoul, pits four players from eight countries against each other in four-ball and singles formats.

South Korea lead Pool A on four points, one ahead of England after their quartet of Charley Hull, Georgia Hall, Bronte Law and Jodi Ewart Shadoff won one match and halved the other against Australia.

Cristie Kerr and Lexi Thompson got the US on the board in Pool B with a 2-up win over Pernilla Lindberg and Madeline Sagstrom but Sweden hit back through Anna Nordqvist and Caroline Hedwall, who beat Michelle Wie and Jessica Korda by the same score.

Kerr, who has played in the two previous editions of the Crown, thanked her partner for carrying the partnership as she struggled with her swing.

"It wasn't pretty today, I

didn't contribute that much," she told reporters. "When I was out of it, which was probably three quarters of the day today, Lexi was in there."

Thailand, who chose to split up sisters Moriya and Ariya Jutanugarn, top Pool B after beating Japan in one match and halving the other.

US Women's Open champion Ariya, the younger Jutanugarn, said she tried to make partner Sherman Santiwitthana-phong loosen up a bit after their first tee shots.

"I'm like, our goal is we're not going to be scared. We're just going to hit, because I trust you," she said. "You have to trust me. Like, don't be scared."

World number one Park Sung-hyun partnered fellow major winner Kim In-kyung to a 1-up win for the top-ranked Koreans before Chun In-gee and Ryu So-yeon won their match 2-up.

Big-hitting Park drove the green at the par-four 14th, which measured 263 yards on Thursday, then holed her putt for eagle to set Korea on their path towards victory.

Organisers, concerned about the impact of approaching Typhoon Kong-rey, said on Thursday that the third round of matches would begin as soon as the second slate of ties had been completed today.

SPOTLIGHT

Holder Wozniacki, Kvitova book WTA Finals berths



Reuters
Singapore

WTA Finals holder Caroline Wozniacki and former champion Petra Kvitova have clinched places in this month's season-ending tournament in Singapore, the WTA announced yesterday.

The pair join world number one Simona Halep, Angelique Kerber and Naomi Osaka who have already qualified for the Oct. 21-28 tournament at the Singapore Sports Hub.

"Winning the WTA Finals last year was a huge accomplishment for me and helped my confidence leading into this season," Wozniacki, who won the Australian Open in January, said.

"I look forward to coming back to Singapore to try and defend my title," the 28-year-old Dane added.

Wozniacki secured her the spot after a routine 7-5 6-4 win against

Estonia's Anett Kontaveit at the China Open in Beijing yesterday.

Czech Kvitova, who won the WTA Finals title in 2011, has qualified for the first time since suffering career-threatening injuries to her left playing hand after a 2016 stabbing that kept her out for six months.

Kvitova, who lifted the Wimbledon trophy in 2011 and 2014, required surgery after trying to protect herself from a man wielding a knife who gained access to her apartment.

"It will be my first time back there (the WTA Finals) since I came back to tennis so it means a lot to me and has always been one of my big goals for the season," Kvitova, who has won five titles this season, said.

The top eight singles players at the \$7m prize money event will compete in a round-robin format with the winner taking home the Billie Jean King Trophy.

The top eight doubles teams will compete for the Martina Navratilova Trophy.

BOTTOMLINE

Throwback Tsitsipas sets up Nishikori clash in Tokyo

AFP
Tokyo

Bjorn Borg lookalike Stefanos Tsitsipas survived a mid-match meltdown to beat Australia's Alex de Minaur 6-3, 5-7, 6-1 yesterday and reach the Japan Open quarter-finals.

The 20-year-old Greek will face local hero Kei Nishikori for a place in the last four after the fifth seed came through an absorbing contest in two hours, 20 minutes.

Elsewhere, second seed Kevin Anderson also advanced, while Germany's Jan-

Lennard Struff continued his dream run in Tokyo.

Tsitsipas, ranked 15th in the world, is something of a throwback.

He bears more than a passing resemblance to tennis legend Borg – from his ice-cool demeanour down to the headband and tight shorts.

His game also relies more on angles and touch than today's power merchants, and the sweeping one-handed backhand Tsitsipas drilled past de Minaur for most of their match has all the hallmarks of his idol Roger Federer.

He reached his first two ATP finals this year, losing both times to Rafael Nadal in

Barcelona and Toronto.

But Tsitsipas will feel he has the weapons to upset Nishikori, despite squandering two match points to surrender the second set.

"I expect a tough match against him," he said. "Obviously he's playing at home so he's going to be super-pumped to do well. I need to be well prepared for that battle."

Wimbledon finalist Anderson ultimately had too much in the locker for young American Frances Tiafoe, progressing with a 6-3, 3-6, 6-2 victory.

The South African, ranked ninth in the world, will face eighth seed Richard Gas-

quet in the last eight after the Frenchman ousted Australian Nick Kyrgios 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/1).

"Kevin is a top 10 player and has been in the Wimbledon and US Open finals so I have nothing to lose," said Gasquet.

"I know what I have to do to beat him but I also know it will be very tough."

Struff, who dumped out top seed Marin Cilic in the first round, produced a gutsy 7-6 (7/3), 6-7 (2/7), 6-4 win over Frenchman Jeremy Chardy.

The world number 56 next faces Denis Shapovalov after the Canadian knocked out three-time Grand Slam winner Stan Wawrinka late on Wednesday.

FOCUS

Qatar delegation leaves for Buenos Aires Youth Olympics

By Sports Reporter
Doha

A Qatar delegation has left Doha for Buenos Aires to take part in the Youth Olympic Games to be held there from October 6 to 18.

Abdullah Hashim is the administrative director of the delegation which includes athletes Awab Baro, Ahmed al-Haj and Abdul Aziz Mohamed and swimmer Yacoub al-Khulaifi.

They were selected on the basis of their performances in several international events. This

is the third edition of the Youth Olympics following Singapore (2010) and Nanjing, China (2014).

The Buenos Aires event will open tomorrow at 8:00pm Doha time with a special ceremony.

The sports contested at the Youth Games are the same as those scheduled for the traditional Games, but with some adaptations, and a limited number of disciplines and events. For example, in aquatics, the IOC decided to include diving and swimming events but excluded synchronised swimming and water polo.



Australia's Ned Middlehurst in action during a Climbing practice session ahead of the Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires, Argentina. (Reuters)

CRICKET / IND VS WI, DAY 1, 1ST TEST

Young gun's debut ton puts India on top

Shaw is youngest Indian to score a century on Test debut as hosts end Day 1 on 364-4

AFP
Rajkot, India

Teenager **Prithvi Shaw** became the youngest Indian to score a century on Test debut as the hosts took opening day honours in the first match against the West Indies yesterday.

Shaw, 18, also became India's second-youngest century maker after Sachin Tendulkar as he blasted his way to a century in 99 deliveries in Rajkot.

India were 364 for four at stumps after electing to bat first. Skipper Virat Kohli, on 72, and wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant, on 17, were batting at close of play.

But the day belonged to Shaw, a diminutive right-handed opener and Indian Premier League star

for the Delhi Daredevils, as he and Cheteshwar Pujara put on a 206-run second wicket partnership.

"I was a bit nervous to start off but when I got in, I got comfortable. I just tried to play my natural game. I was just thinking that it's another game for me and then it just happened," said Shaw.

"Playing for India, it was a big thing for me. I wanted to make this chance count. It was a good challenge for me and I think I did well," he added.

He led India's fightback after they lost opener Lokesh Rahul for nought in the very first over off Shannon Gabriel.

Shaw was finally caught and bowled by leg-spinner Devendra Bishoo for 134 in the last over before tea. His knock came in 154 balls with 19 boundaries.

The now-retired Tendulkar, In-

dia's most successful batsman, was aged 17 when he scored 119 not out against England in 1990, but that was in his ninth Test match.

Shaw reached the landmark with two runs off paceman Keemo Paul, punching his fist in the air as the home crowd gave him a standing ovation.

EARLY EXPERIENCE

"From the smaller age I used to play a lot of school cricket, 30 or 35 school games in a year," said Shaw, who had once scored a record 546 runs in school cricket.

"I have played a lot of cricket in Ranji and it just keeps going on with so much cricket around. All that experience has helped me," added the Mumbai-born Shaw.

Shaw is the fourth-youngest international batsman to score a century on debut. He is also the third

batsman after Shikhar Dhawan (85 balls) and Dwayne Smith (93) to hit his debut ton in under 100 balls.

Bangladesh batsman Mohamed Ashraful is the youngest debut Test centurion, followed by Zimbabwe's Hamilton Masakadza and Pakistan's Salim Malik.

Pujara also played an uncharacteristically quick knock as he brought up fifty off 67 deliveries, but missed out on his hundred after being caught behind off debutant paceman Sherman Lewis.

Kraigg Brathwaite, standing in as captain after Jason Holder suffered a last-minute ankle injury, juggled his bowlers but the absence of the experienced Kemar Roach and Holder was painfully evident.

Roach is back in Barbados to attend the funeral of his grandmother.

Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane, who made 41, took over from Shaw with a

Scorecard

INDIA 1st innings	
P. Shaw c & b Bishoo	134
L. Rahul lbw b Gabriel	0
C. Pujara c Dowrich b Lewis	86
V. Kohli batting	72
A. Rahane c Dowrich b Chase	41
R. Pant batting	17
Extras (b9, lb1, nb4)	14
Total (four wickets, 89 overs)	364
Fall of wickets: 1-3 (Rahul), 2-209 (Pujara), 3-232 (Shaw), 4-337 (Rahane)	
Bowling: Gabriel 18-1-66-1 (nb2), Paul 10-1-41-0 (nb2), Lewis 12-0-56-1, Bishoo 30-1-113-1, Chase 16-0-67-1, Brathwaite 3-0-11-0	



patient 105-run partnership despite West Indies bowlers keeping a tidy line and length to check the flow of runs in the final session of play.

India raced to 232-3 at tea, managing another 132 runs in the evening session's 38 overs with Kohli and Rahane batting cautiously.

Kohli, who is the world's number one Test batsman, got to his half-century against Bishoo and was getting more dangerous with each passing ball.

Indian vice-captain Rahane though lost his cool against off-spinner Roston Chase to get caught behind in the final few overs of the day.

SPOTLIGHT

Embattled Ronaldo to miss Portugal internationals, says coach

AFP
Lisbon

Cristiano Ronaldo has been left out of Portugal's next four internationals, the national coach Fernando Santos said yesterday, days after rape allegations against the Juventus star resurfaced.

Santos told a press conference that he and the president of the Portuguese Football Federation (FPF) Fernando Gomes talked to Ronaldo and "we agreed that the player was not available for this or the next call up".

"I will not reveal the details of the conversation we three had," said Santos when pressed by reporters.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner missed the two internationals Portugal played in September. At the time, Santos suggested that the 33-year-old's absence was temporary and intended to help the star attacker adapt after his move from Real Madrid to Juventus.

"This is not what I am saying now," Santos said yesterday when asked if the explanation was the same.

The omission comes as Ronaldo, one of the world's most successful and highly-paid sportsmen, faces down allegations of rape.

Last month, an American woman, Kathryn Mayorga, accused Ronaldo in a 32-page complaint filed with a district court in Nevada, of raping her on June 13, 2009.

Asked about the allegations, Santos defended the player. "I know Cristiano Ronaldo very well and I fully believe his word when he says he would never commit a crime like this."

Earlier Gomes also spoke up for Ronaldo. "I believe what he said... because I've known Ronaldo for many years and I can attest to his good character," Gomes said.

Ronaldo, Portugal's captain, will miss three Nations League games, against Poland on October 11 and against Italy and Poland in November and a friendly against Scotland later this month.

Meanwhile, Eder, who scored the extra-time winner as Portugal beat France in the final of Euro 2016 but was dropped for the World Cup in Russia, returns to the 25-man squad.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Rui Patricio (Wolves/ENG), Beto (Goztepe/TUR), Claudio Ramos (Tondela)

Defenders: Cedric Soares (Southampton/ENG), Joao Cancelo (Juventus/ITA), Kevin Rodrigues (Real Sociedad/ESP), Luis Neto (Zenit/RUS), Mario Rui (Napoli/ITA), Pedro Mendes (Montpellier/FRA), Pepe (Besiktas/TUR), Ruben Dias (Benfica)

Midfielders: Bruno Fernandes (Sporting), Danilo Pereira (FC Porto), Gedson Fernandes (Benfica), Pizzi (Benfica), Renato Sanches (Bayern Munich/GER), Ruben Neves (Wolves/ENG), Sergio Oliveira (FC Porto), William Carvalho (Betics/ESP)

Forwards: Andre Silva (Sevilla/ESP), Bernardo Silva (Manchester City/ENG), Bruma (RB Leipzig/GER), Eder (Lokomotiv Moscow/RUS), Goncalo Guedes (Valencia/ESP), Helder Costa (Wolves/ENG).



Shaw's maiden Test ton underlines child prodigy status

Reuters
Mumbai

India's Prithvi Shaw has been compared to batting great Sachin Tendulkar since he was a 14-year-old schoolboy and the lofty parallels will intensify after the teenage prodigy made a sparkling hundred on his Test debut yesterday.

At 18 years and 329 days, Shaw became the youngest Indian and fourth-youngest overall to score a ton on his Test debut during a knock of 134 off 154 balls against West Indies in Rajkot. The hosts reached 364 for four at the close after Shaw's heroics put India on course for a big first-innings total in the opening Test. In the process Shaw, who led India to the under-19 World Cup title ear-

lier this year, also became the 15th Indian to hit a century on debut.

His breezy knock received praise from Tendulkar, who was also known for dominating opposition bowlers as a young batsman. "Lovely to see such an attacking knock in your first innings, @prithvishaw! Continue batting fearlessly," Tendulkar wrote on Twitter.

Like compatriot Tendulkar, Shaw shot to prominence from inter-school cricket when he smashed 546 off 330 balls for Rizvi Springfield in a minors' cricket competition in Mumbai in 2013. He hit 85 fours and five sixes during that knock.

For his part, Tendulkar, who went on to become the most prolific run-scorer in an international career spanning 24 years, once held the record for the highest

partnership of 664 in school cricket with former India batsman Vinod Kambli.

Both Tendulkar and Shaw are short in stature and baby-faced and have spent their formative years toiling on the pitches in Mumbai, known as the breeding ground for producing future India cricketers. The similarities do not end there. Shaw scored a hundred in his first-class debut in a Ranji Trophy semi-final for Mumbai in 2017 and then became the youngest player to score a century on his Duleep Trophy debut, a record previously held by Tendulkar.

SHAW'S CHANCE

Murali Vijay and Shikhar Dhawan opened for India at the start of the recent five-Test series in England but both were overlooked after the 4-1 defeat, handing a chance

to Shaw, who was a non-playing squad member for the final two England Tests.

He could not have been more impressive in his maiden Test knock, scoring his first runs with a punch off the back foot through covers off his second delivery, reminding everyone why he had been tipped for a bright future in national colours. Shaw, who hit 19 fours, was often a tad flashy for an opening batsman with his shot selection but showed stunning fluency in scoring on both sides of the wicket.

"First I was a bit nervous but when I got in I was quite comfortable and I was just trying to play my natural game, what I do in first-class cricket and in India A, and I just kept on going," Shaw told broadcaster Star Sports. "I was not thinking about it as my first game,

I was just thinking that it's another game and it just happened."

Shaw's attacking knock was, however, more reminiscent of Tendulkar's one-day opening partner Virender Sehwag, who bludgeoned the South African attack on his Test debut to score 105 in Bloemfontein in 2001. Shaw's hunger for runs was evident when he stood rooted to his crease in disappointment after his dismissal, tamed offering leg-spinner Devendra Bishoo an easy return catch.

"I don't think it was enough after scoring that 100. The wicket was good and I should have kept batting," he said, dedicating his first Test 100 to his father.

"I was very disappointed, there were only 10 minutes left for the tea break and you should be a little bit careful."