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Jennings century puts Sri Lanka on the ropes



FOOTBALL | Page 7

United stun Juventus as City, Real enjoy big wins

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Friday, November 9, 2018
Rabi'a 11, 1440 AH

GULF TIMES SPORT



COMBAT SPORT

Mayweather cancels Japan kickboxing fight

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FOCUS

Bassem matches Epailard to share top honours

'It's very nice to start the weekend with the win. I know Julien is fast and I saw him before I went in. I tried my best'

By Sahar Bidappa
Doha

Last year's Grand Prix winner at Al Shaqab, Bassem Hassan Mohamed picked up from where he left off last season as the Qatar rider began the final round of the Global Champions Tour with a victory in yesterday's opening class.

At the magnificent Al Shaqab arena, Bassem tied with Frenchman Julien Epailard, both finishing in 24.85 seconds to share the top honours in the CSI 5* Two phases 1.45m event. It was a remarkable start to the final round of GCT, with a tied finish being a rare occurrence in showjumping.

There were a total of 51 riders who took up the challenge to clear the highly technical course created by Uilano Vezzani. After Epailard had taken the lead with 12-year-old Stallion Safari d Auge, Bassem was the 47th rider to enter the competition with his trusted 12-year-old gelding Argelith Squid. The two combined perfectly to astonishingly equal Epailard's timing, as they took confident strides under the lights to the delight of home fans. Ireland's Bertram Allen, who was second last to go, with Casper, finished third with a time of 25.16 seconds.

"It's very nice to start the weekend with the win. I know Julien is fast and I saw him before I went in. I tried my best and ended up with the win," Bassem said.

The Netherlands' Marc Houtzager on board Sterrehof's Bacarat had taken an early lead, only to be beaten by Great Britain's Ben Maher and Madame X. Norway's Geir Gulliksen, the 40th rider to enter the ring, knocked Maher's time by setting a time of 25.45 seconds on VDL Groep Qatar.

Geir would soon be beaten by Epailard and Safari d Auge,



Qatar's Bassem Hassan Mohamed astride Argelith Squid clears a hurdle during the CSI 5* Two phases 1.45m class of the Global Champions Tour at Al Shaqab arena yesterday.

who edged in front by successfully completing the last line in 8 strides passing the finish line at 24.85 seconds. But Bassem had other ideas as he matched Epailard's time by producing a stunning round with Argelith Squid.

Bassem also had a good day in the team event as he led Doha Fursan Qatar to third-place finish along with teammate Michael Whitaker in the first round of the Global Champions League.

Bassem was astride Gunder, while Michael Whitaker partnered Strides Hilanasterne as the two pairs tallied 160.11 secs.

London Knights threw down the gauntlet to their closest rivals, executing powerful double clears, to finish on top, ahead of tomorrow's showdown.

The Knights' formidable duo of Ben Maher and Nicola Philippaerts stayed cool and ended on a clean score sheet in the fastest

combined time to put them into pole position for tomorrow's major contest. They have been leading the season ranking consistently and are currently 23 points ahead of Valkenswaard United. Maher said: "It was a perfect start to the weekend. It was quite a big course today for that first round, but we had a good plan and we have great horses in the team."

Rome Gladiators were the

only other team to achieve double clears with no time penalties thanks to high calibre performances from Laura Kraut and Lorenzo de Luca putting them in second spot on the grid.

Valkenswaard United's Marcus Ehning and Alberto Zorzi suffered four faults each pushing them down the order. Now the teams have less than 48 hours to make strategic decisions on which riders and horses they will field in



France's Julien Epailard with stallion Safari d Auge finished tied first. In this picture he is receiving a trophy from Argentinian Ambassador to Qatar HE Carlos Hernandez.

the GCL Round 2 showdown tomorrow, which will decide which teams go to the GCL Super Cup at the new GC Playoffs with over €10 million in prize money.

THIRD LEG OF HATHAB FROM TODAY

Meanwhile, the third leg of the Hathab National Equestrian series will also be held simultaneously with GCT today and tomorrow. A branchchild of HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of the Qatar Olympic Committee, Hathab was a runaway success in its inaugural season.

The series – worth QR1mn in overall prize money – provides an opportunity for young riders from Qatar to gain experience and test themselves against other best talents in the country over a gruelling 12 legs, which is spread over six months.

RESULTS CSI5* 1.45m Two Phases: A + A, Both Phases Against the Clock (€25,000)

1. Bassem Mohammed (QAT) and

Argelith Squid. Time: 24.85 secs
1. Julien Epailard (FRA) and Safari d Auge Time: 24.85 secs
3. Bertram Allen (IRL) and GK Casper. Time 25.16 secs

CSI 5* GCL Round 1 – 1.50/1.55m (€60,000 to individual class winners)

1. London Knights: Nicola Philippaerts (H&M Chilli Willi) and Ben Maher (Explosion W). Total time: 152.96 secs
2. Roma Gladiators: Lorenzo de Luca (Irenece Horta) and Laura Kraut (Zeremonie). Total time 154.55 secs
3. Doha Fursan Qatar: Michael Whitaker (Strides Hilanasterne) and Bassem Mohammed (Gunder) Total time: 160.11 secs.

TODAY'S SCHEDULE GLOBAL CHAMPIONS TOUR

4:30pm: CSI 5* Against-the-clock 1.45m (€50,000); 6:30pm: CSI 5* Against-the-clock with jump-off 1.50/1.55m (€145,000)
HATHAB SCHEDULE
9am: Against the clock NO Jump Off 1.00/1.15m; 2pm: Against the clock with jump off 1.20/1.30m

SPOTLIGHT

Argentiniens hope to introduce polo to Qatar

By Mikhil Bhat
Doha

Last month in Buenos Aires, polo was played under the Olympic banner for the first time since 1936, when it was showcased at 2018 Youth Olympic Games.

At Campo Argentina de Polo, also known as The Cathedral of Polo, in Buenos Aires, junior competitors from as many as 10 countries demonstrated the sport.

The Youth Olympics in the Argentinian capital also coincided with the South American visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani.

"Argentina and Qatar are in a strategic partnership. It's not just about economics and politics, we have also said that we will be working together in sports, culture," Argentina's ambassador to Qatar, Carlos Hernandez, said at a press conference yesterday.

And so, as part of that initiative, Argentinian Polo Association (AAP) president Eduardo Novillo Astrada is

on a visit to Qatar, on an invitation by Qatar Olympic Committee President HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani for the Longines Global Champions Tour equestrian competition at Al Shaqab.

"I have a very good relationship with Jan Tops," Astrada told *Gulf Times* yesterday, referring to the Dutch former equestrian Olympic gold medalist and the mind behind the Global Champions Tour, which began in 2006. "What I am trying to do in polo is something he did with Longines Global Champions Tour."

"We had His Highness the Amir in Argentina and saw polo, which was also part of the Youth Olympic Games recently. And Sheikh Joaan heads the Qatar Olympic Committee. After that I received this invitation to come. And I thank him for that. So let's see how the discussions pan out. We hope we can expand polo around the world," said Astrada, who himself has been an accomplished polo player.

While the British are credited with popularising the modern version of the sport, which involves horseback



Argentinian Polo Association president Eduardo Novillo Astrada.

riders using wooden mallets to hit a solid ball in opposition's goal, taking it from the Subcontinent to Europe and elsewhere, it has come to be truly



Argentina's ambassador to Qatar HE Carlos Hernandez. PICTURES: Othman Khalid

dominated by Argentinians who boast some of the biggest names today, including the highest-ranked Adolfo Cambiaso.

"It's like All Blacks in rugby," Astrada said.

Astrada spoke about building on Qatar involvement in horses around the world, including showjumping and racing, to help spread polo, which has been attempting to make a comeback at the Olympic Games.

"Just like the people of Qatar, we love horses in Argentina. The tournaments in Argentina attract a huge number of people from across the world," Astrada said.

"We know that Qatar has a strong equestrian team, and we hope that we can also build a strong polo team too," Astrada said that in Argentina polo is a popular sport, and not elitist, as is the case with many other countries.

"People own horses, but there are also people in Argentina who don't own horses, and pay rentals for horses to play. Obviously that's a popular perception that if you don't have a horse you can't play polo. But that's not the case," he said.

Talking about other benefits, he said, "Horses are very good for young kids. They make children responsible

for an animal, take them away from the phones, video games, television."

Astrada, who took up the reins at the Argentinian association last year, said it was their responsibility as the best team in the world to promote the game in the world.

"Twenty years ago we used to go buy saddles in England, the boots, the mallets. But today we are big producers, and we are a big industry. We have to start spreading the sport."

As part of the polo tour that Astrada spoke about, the plans are to host the first tournament in Argentina next year, before spreading it to three countries in 2020 and five the year after that.

"I am looking at 2020-2021 so we can pull a facility together, but these are still early days," he said, adding that England and USA are the other stops on the tour for 2020.

Talking about the talks with Qatar, he said, "We see in Qatar the best partner in the region to promote polo."

He added: "You know the people here in charge of sports, they have a vision, and how important it is for the society at large."



BACKLASH

India captain Kohli draws flak for 'leave India' remark

Reuters
New Delhi

Indian cricket captain Virat Kohli was in the eye of a storm on social media after he suggested a local cricket fan relocate to another country for preferring to watch English or Australian batsmen.

The 30-year-old was reading out tweets when he came across one which described Kohli, currently the top ranked Test batsman, as "overrated" and that Australian and English batsmen were more pleasing to watch than "these Indians".

"I don't think you should live in India then," Kohli, who has 27.1mn followers on Twitter, said in a video posted on his new app to sell exclusive merchandise.

"You should go and live somewhere else, you know. Why are you living in our country and loving other countries? I don't mind you not liking me but I don't think you should live in our country... Get your priorities right," he added with a wry smile.

Kohli's comments evoked sharp reactions as people on social media pulled out a 2008 video, in which Kohli, then captain of the India under-19 team, described South African Herschelle Gibbs as his favourite batsman. Also resurfaced his 2016 tweet in which he had con-



Brain fade? Virat Kohli

gratulated Angelique Kerber on her Australian Open victory, declaring the German as his favourite women's tennis player.

"Virat Kohli's statement is a reflection of the bubble that most famous people either slip into or are forced

into," cricket commentator Harsha Bhogle tweeted.

"The voices within it are frequently those that they wish to hear. It is a comfortable bubble and that is why famous people must try hard to prevent it from forming."

Married to Bollywood actress Anushka Sharma, Kohli is the biggest name in Indian cricket and his face is plastered on billboards across the cricket-obsessed country of 1.3bn.

A highly successful cricketer with a penchant to get under an opponent's skin, Kohli is the sole Indian in the Forbes magazine's 2018 list of the world's 100 highest-paid athletes.

He endorses foreign brands including Puma, Audi, Tissot and Uber. One critic posted a picture of Kohli posing with an Audi and suggesting he move to Germany since he loved foreign cars.

Criticism came from India's movie industry as well. "If you want to remain #KingKohli it may be time to teach yourself to think 'What would Dravid say?' before speaking in future," actor Siddharth tweeted, referring to former captain Rahul Dravid who was famous for his batting technique and his economy of words.

"What an idiotic set of words to come from an #India #captain!" the actor added.

One fan, however, said Kohli may have had a brain fade moment and shouldn't be attacked.

SPOTLIGHT

Australia leave Starc, Lyon out of T20 squad v India

Reuters
Melbourne

Australia have left pace spearhead Mitchell Starc, spinner Nathan Lyon and all-rounder Mitchell Marsh out of the 13-man squad for Twenty20 matches against South Africa and India.

Veteran paceman Peter Siddle has also been omitted, with selectors keen for the four to prepare for the upcoming Test series against India by playing red-ball cricket in the domestic Sheffield Shield.

"We know coming off the back of the tour to the UAE, a huge summer at home, and the World Cup and Ashes just around the corner that we have to get the balance right between playing our best T20 team and preparing for the upcoming test series," coach Justin Langer said in a team release yesterday.

"While I know all four have a desire to be playing cricket for Australia in every format, with a really tough Test series against India coming up, we believe their best preparation is to go back and get some really good cricket under their belts in the Sheffield Shield."

Pace bowler Jason Behrendorff will take Starc's place in an attack featuring Nathan Coulter-Nile and Billy Stanlake, while Marcus Stoinis returns after missing the T20 series against Pakistan in the United Arab Emirates.

"Jason Behrendorff has also earned a spot in the squad after returning to full fitness.... Tactically we believe it's important to have a good left-arm swing bowler at our disposal for the four matches," Langer said.

"Marcus missed our recent T20 matches in the UAE because he hadn't resumed bowl-



ing, but now he's back to full fitness he'll add great depth to the squad."

Aaron Finch's Australia were whitewashed 3-0 in the T20 series against Pakistan and will be desperate for wins against the Proteas and India to lift the gloom over the nation's struggles since the Cape Town ball-tampering scandal.

Australia have lost Test series against South Africa and Pakistan, and suffered defeats in 17 of their last 19 one-day internationals including the six-wicket thrashing by the Proteas in the series-opening ODI in Perth on Sunday.

Australia meet South Africa in a one-off T20 match on the Gold Coast on Nov. 17, before three T20s against India starting in Brisbane on Nov. 21.

Squad: Aaron Finch (captain), Alex Carey, Ashton Agar, Jason Behrendorff, Nathan Coulter-Nile, Chris Lynn, Glenn Maxwell, Ben McDermott, D'Arcy Short, Billy Stanlake, Marcus Stoinis, Andrew Tye, Adam Zampa

GALLE TEST

Jennings ton puts Lanka on the ropes

Hosts need 462 to win on a ground no team has successfully chased more than 99

AFP
Galle

Keaton Jennings's first century since his 2016 debut helped England put Sri Lanka on the ropes in the first Test yesterday, setting the hosts a daunting 462 to win at notoriously low-scoring Galle.

The visitors declared at 322 for six on day three with Jennings 146 not out after a patient innings that saw the under-pressure opener deal deftly with the hosts' spin attack.

At the close, Sri Lanka were 15 without loss after Dimuth Karunaratne and Kaushal Silva hung on for seven overs, leaving a further 447 to make at a ground where no team has successfully chased more than 99.

England, with a 139-run first-innings lead and 38-0 overnight, lost a somewhat shaky Rory Burns, brought in to fill the huge shoes of the retired Alastair Cook, in the morning session, run out for 23.

Moeen Ali, out first ball in the first innings, fared little better in the second, driving straight to Rangana Herath at mid-on off Dilruwan Perera for three.

Herath, in his last game before retiring having got his landmark 100th wicket at Galle, then got England captain Joe Root out for the second time in the match, caught behind for three.

But Jennings looked comfortable against the spin of Perera and the others. An LBW appeal when Jennings was on 58 was turned down and Sri Lanka chose - erroneously it turned out - not to review.

Ben Stokes hit a brisk 62 off 93 balls that saw three sixes, including one back over Perera's head and an almighty sweep high over midwicket off Dhananjaya de Silva to bring up the 300.

Shortly before tea he became Perera's second scalp, a demon of a ball pitching outside leg and angling back to take the Durham all-rounder's off stump.

Jos Buttler smashed a quick 35 before being caught off Herath while Ben Foakes, the centurion hero of the first innings, belted out 37 before falling to spinner Akila Dananjaya.

Jennings's performance will



England's Keaton Jennings celebrates his century against Sri Lanka in Galle yesterday.

go some way to silencing his critics - many of whom were calling for him to be dropped after a poor series against India this summer when he averaged just 18.

Having scored 112 at Mumbai in December 2016 on his debut, he was axed after a disastrous tour of his native South Africa in 2017. He returned against Pakistan in May this year.

After stumps yesterday, the 26-year-old conceded that the past 18 months had been "really tough".

"I've faced some things in my cricketing life I've had to learn from. I've had to develop myself," Jennings said.

"It's just really pleasing and a big thank you to the people who have stuck with me over the last 18 months, backed me through some tough times, waking in the night panicking and stressing,"

he said. "When you're waking up at 6.30 in the morning and reading about your technical deficiencies it's not human to say it wouldn't affect you," he added.

"I have only watched Keaton Jennings live in two Test matches and he has got a hundred in both I must be his lucky charm !!!" former England great Allan Lamb said on Twitter.

"Well played fantastic and thoroughly deserved by the hard work"

Sri Lanka's spin bowling coach Piyal Wijetunge said however that the hosts still have a chance to win, in part because the notorious Galle wicket is behaving differently this time.

"There is a big challenge, but it's not the kind of wicket we usually see in Galle. If the batsmen do their duty, the 440-odd that we need will be tough, but

it's not impossible," he said. Sri Lanka's best hope though is the weather, with rain playing havoc with the series so far and thunderstorms forecast for Galle today and tomorrow - should the hosts survive day four.

England first innings 342 (B. Foakes 107, S. Curran 48; S. Lakmal 3-18, D. Perera 5-31) Sri Lanka first innings 203 (A. Mathews 52; M. Ali 4-66)

England second innings R. Burns run out 23 K. Jennings not out 146 M. Ali c Herath b Perera 3 J. Root c Dickwella b Herath 3 B. Stokes b Perera 62 J. Buttler c Silva b Herath 35 B. Foakes c Mendis b Dananjaya 37 S. Curran not out 0

Extras (b4, lb7, nb2) 13 **Total** (6 wickets, 93 overs) 322 **Did not bat:** A. Rashid, J. Leach,

J. Anderson **Bowling:** Perera 30-3-94-2, Lakmal 9-2-30-0, Herath 23-1-59-2, Dananjaya 18.5-2-87-1, de Silva 12.1-2-41-0

Fall of wickets 1-60 (Burns), 2-67 (Ali), 3-74 (Root), 4-181 (Stokes), 5-258 (Buttler), 6-319 (Foakes)

Sri Lanka second innings F. Karunaratne not out 7 J. Silva not out 8

Extras 0 **Total** (0 wickets, 7 overs) 15 **Did not bat:** B. Mendis, L. Chandimal, A. Mathews, N. Dickwella, D. de Silva, M. Perera, R. Lakmal, A. Dananjaya, H. Herath **Bowling:** Curran 1-1-0-0, Anderson 1-0-4-0, Ali 2-0-7-0, Rashid 2-0-2-0, Leach 1-0-2-0

Toss: England **Umpires:** Chris Gaffaney (NZL) and Marais Erasmus (RSA)

Khawaja confident of recovery for first India Test

Sydney: Usman Khawaja's comeback from surgery on his knee is ahead of schedule with the opener confident of being ready for the first Test against India next month.

The experienced left-hander, who hit a fighting hundred to help Australia scramble to a draw in the first Test against Pakistan last month, has been out of action since the second Test of that series. His stability at the top of the order - which is already without the banned Steve Smith and David Warner - has been sorely missed after a string of recent Australian batting capitulations. He underwent surgery late last month and is already back running.

"I'm 10 kilograms lighter than I was in South Africa maybe seven months ago, so I'm sure that helps the knees in some respects," he told cricket.com.



au. "My recovery is going really well so far. I'm trying to keep it cool, but it's actually going really well. "I feel like I'm a little bit ahead of where I should be," added the 31-year-old. "If I keep doing the little things right - looking after my body, being disciplined - hopefully that'll transition to me coming back in time." Cricket Australia's website said there was a chance Khawaja could play in Queensland's Sheffield Shield match against Victoria starting on November 27.

FOCUS

Cricket Australia chaos distracting players: Finch

AFP
Adelaide

Disarray within Cricket Australia has distracted the Australian team, one-day skipper Aaron Finch said yesterday as he urged his players to keep their focus on the field.

The embattled governing body has been under intense pressure after a scathing review said its "arrogant" culture contributed to players cheating in the pursuit of victory. It has led to an overhaul of the organisation.

Chairman David Peever last week followed chief executive James Sutherland out the door, director Mark Taylor quit this week and team performance boss Pat Howard is also leaving.

"When there are changes, and there are things being said and written, I think it's hard not to read it sometimes when it's everywhere," Finch said in Adelaide

ahead of the second ODI against South Africa.

"You might spend a little bit of time reading it, and putting some kind of doubts in your mind."

Cricketers Steve Smith, David Warner and Cameron Bancroft were banned for trying to alter the ball with sandpaper in South Africa in March. Since then Australia's form has been dire, particularly with the bat.

They go into today's clash against the Proteas with 17 defeats in their last 19 one-dayers, including a six-wicket thrashing in the tour opener in Perth.

Finch said confidence was low and it was important that the players focused on the basics.

"It's about getting back to the basics of partnerships and making sure you connect with your partner when you first get out there," he said.

"When we talk about confidence in the batting group it's about not letting outside distractions affect your game."

BOTTOMLINE

Taylor's gesture at Hafeez 'disgraceful', says Sarfraz

Reuters
Dubai

Pakistan captain Sarfraz Ahmed has slammed New Zealand batsman Ross Taylor for making a "disgraceful" throwing gesture when facing the bowling of veteran all-rounder Mohamed Hafeez during the one-day international in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday.

Taylor appeared to query the bowling of part-time offspinner Hafeez whose action has been deemed illegal by the International Cricket Council several times in recent years.

Sarfraz had a heated exchange with Taylor and the on-field umpires as New Zealand, fired by a hat-trick by returning paceman Trent Boult, won the series-opener by 47 runs.

"I will say that Taylor's action was not correct," Sarfraz said. "It's not his job to

give (the) action which was shown on TV. It was disgraceful, for me.

"His job is to do batting and if he concentrates on that, it's better. I complained to umpires that his action did not come under sportsmanship.

"Ross is a professional cricketer and he should not have done that. He did it two or three times - it's (the) umpires' job," Sarfraz added.

"Hafeez's action has no problem and (Taylor) was trying to create an issue

without a reason." Hafeez was suspended from bowling twice in 2014-15 and again in 2017 due to problems with his action. His latest suspension was lifted in April.

It was unclear whether Pakistan had made an official complaint to the match referee but Taylor's gesture is likely to come under ICC scrutiny.

Hafeez's bowling will also be under the spotlight in the second game of the three-match series in Abu Dhabi today.

BADMINTON

Cancer-hit Lee announces comeback bid

AFP
Kuala Lumpur

Malaysian star **Lee Chong Wei** yesterday said he plans to return to badminton after successful treatment for nose cancer, insisting he had no intention of retiring.

The ex-world number one said he could resume training as early as next month and was targeting a competitive comeback at the All England Open in March.

"I finished all my treatment... and have recovered very well," a cheerful and healthy-looking Lee, 36, told a press conference in Kuala Lumpur.

"I want to come back to court," he said, adding: "As of now, I am not retiring."

The three-time Olympic silver medalist was making his



first public appearance since his shock diagnosis was announced in September.

Lee, who returned from treatment in Taiwan last month, said it was his "dream" to play in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, which would be his fifth Summer

Games.

"I think qualify (for the Tokyo Olympics) should be no problem for me," he said, but added that his health was his current priority.

"I just try my very best because I love my country... and I

love badminton," he said.

The player however conceded that if his health does not improve enough, he may have to hang up his racquet: "If my condition is good, I will continue. If I can't, I will stop."

Lee, who enjoys superstar status in Malaysia, was diagnosed with early-stage nose cancer, forcing him to pull out of the Asian Games and world championships.

The father of two said that when he found out about the illness, "I was crying for a week, couldn't eat, couldn't sleep"

On the advice of his doctors he travelled to Taiwan for treatment, during which he lost five kilos (11 pounds).

"This is the toughest period of my life," said Lee, who has slipped to eighth in the world rankings. "But I had the support of my loved ones to continue fighting."

Lee said that he underwent over 30 sessions of treatment at the hands of seven doctors.

He said they have given him a clean bill of health, and has regained three kilos since coming home.

Nose cancer is perhaps the biggest blow suffered by Lee, who was banned after testing positive for a proscribed anti-inflammatory at the 2014 world championships.

Lee returned to the sport in 2015, after authorities accepted he took the drug inadvertently.

His unsuccessful attempts to capture Malaysia's first ever Olympic gold medal at three consecutive Summer Games were followed avidly back home, as was his long-running rivalry with Chinese superstar Lin Dan.

His last shot at Olympic gold at Rio 2016 ended in failure when the Malaysian lost out to China's Chen Long in a nail-biting final.

FOCUS

Mayweather cancels kickboxing fight

'This exhibition was previously arranged as a 'Special Bout' purely for entertainment'

AFP
Los Angeles

Boxing superstar **Floyd Mayweather** on Wednesday scrapped a planned fight with a Japanese kickboxer, claiming he had been duped into agreeing to the contest.

In a lengthy statement posted on social media, Mayweather said he had been "blindsided" by organizers of the proposed bout against Tenshin Nasukawa, set for New Year's Eve in Saitama.

"I want it to be clear that I, Floyd Mayweather, never agreed to an official bout with Tenshin Nasukawa," Mayweather wrote on Instagram.

The 41-year-old retired welterweight champion said he had travelled to Japan last week to discuss participating in a private bout against Nasukawa for a "small group of wealthy spectators for a very large fee".

"This exhibition was previously arranged as a 'Special Bout' purely for entertainment purposes with no intentions of being represented as an official fight nor televised worldwide," Mayweather wrote.

Soon after arriving at a press conference in Tokyo on Monday, Mayweather said he and his team "were completely derailed by the new direction this event was going".

"We should have put a stop to it immediately," Mayweather wrote.



US boxer Floyd Mayweather Jr. (left) poses with Japanese kickboxer Tenshin Nasukawa during a press conference on Monday. (AFP)

"I want to sincerely apologize to my fans for the very misleading information that was announced during this press conference.

"I can assure you that I too was completely blindsided by the arrangements that were being made without my consent or approval."

In Tokyo on Monday, Mayweather had vowed to give "blood, sweat and tears" in the fight against Nasukawa.

"It's always been a goal of mine to go outside out of the US and display my talent. The world has never seen Mayweather compete live in (Japan)," Mayweather told reporters at the

press conference, framing the fight as an expansion of his businesses to the Far East.

Mayweather has not fought since his money-spinning boxing showdown with mixed martial arts star Conor McGregor in Las Vegas in 2017. Mayweather returned to retirement following that bout with a perfect 50-0

unbeaten record.

However the American has repeatedly hinted at coming out of retirement since that fight, most recently teasing a possible rematch against Filipino icon Manny Pacquiao.

Nasukawa, 20, meanwhile, had told reporters on Monday it had been an "easy decision" to agree to fight Mayweather.

"It was a surprise offer but I accepted without hesitation," said Nasukawa.

"I don't care what the rules are. I want to be the man who changes history. I'll do that with these fists, with one punch — just watch."

Mayweather said he had been reluctant to speak out at Monday's press conference because he did not want "to create a huge disturbance by combating what was being said".

"I am a retired boxer that earns an unprecedented amount of money, globally, for appearances, speaking engagements and occasional small exhibitions," he said.

US-based pundits however poured scorn on Mayweather's stated reasons for the U-turn.

Yahoo Sports combat sports columnist Kevin Iole greeted Mayweather's volte-face with scepticism.

"Mayweather is hardly a shrinking violet and he has never — ever — failed to speak up on his own behalf since he became a professional boxer," Iole wrote. "One would have to be a fool to believe this."

GOLF

Flawless Garcia fires 64 for four-shot Nedbank lead

AFP
Sun City, South Africa

Sergio Garcia fired a superb eight-under-par opening-round 64 in the EPGA Nedbank Golf Challenge yesterday to take a four-shot lead at Sun City with star attraction Rory McIlroy eight behind.

Finn Mikko Korhonen, Mike Lorenzo-Vera from France and South African Charl Schwartzel share second place on 68.

"This sort of round does not happen very often, I was very fortunate," said the 38-year-old Spanish winner of the 2017 Masters after his bogey-free round.

While the two-time Sun City champion put his good fortune down to the vagaries of the wind not punishing him and some "bonus putts", his round on a first visit to Sun City since 2013 was remarkable.

"This kind of round does not happen very often but I played very consistently and kept the ball in play," said Garcia.

"This tricky wind moved all over the place and on one hole you could have three or four dif-



ferent winds.

"You have to just trust your shot and sometimes it goes wrong, but I was fortunate to get it right a lot of the time — to be bogey-free was really nice.

"I drove the ball nicely, hit a lot of fairways and greens, but it just does not happen on this course that you are going to hit the ball to two feet every time.

"I made three or four very good putts, those little bonuses that you do not expect to make. But I gave myself lots of chances,

so then this leads to more birdies."

Garcia's error-free round was in stark contrast to that of world number six McIlroy, whose level-par 72 was characterised by some wayward driving.

'BAD FINISH'

McIlroy's front nine was promising with three birdies offset by just a single bogey, at the par-four third when his ball plugged just below the lip of a greenside bunker.

But after birdieing the par-four 13th, the four-time major winner twice drove into the bushes, leading to sixes at the par-five 14th and the par-four 17th.

"I actually played pretty nicely on the front nine but it was a bad, bad finish. The driver let me down a couple of times which left me out of position and led to a couple of big numbers.

"If I can tidy that up tomorrow I should be alright, but obviously I'm pretty disappointed right now," said McIlroy.

In nine previous appearances at Sun City, 2011 Masters champion Schwartzel has had five top-10 finishes, including being runner-up to German Martin Kaymer in 2012.

"Everything's good, the game is on the money and it is about as good as I have ever played," he said after his 68.

"So I feel confident, but transferring that to playing well is a different thing. It's been a very difficult year, so it is nice to play at home — that builds confidence and I'll probably see some results soon.

"It was very difficult this morning, the wind was blowing a lot and the first few holes were

straight into it.

"Making a good start is key on this course and I only made one bogey, on eight, when the wind turned, I actually hit a good shot but it was way short."

Defending champion Branden Grace of South Africa opened with a 70.

LEADING SCORES AFTER ROUND 1

- 64** — Sergio Garcia (ESP)
- 68** — Mikko Korhonen (FIN), Mike Lorenzo-Vera (FRA), Charl Schwartzel (RSA)
- 69** — Benjamin Hebert (FRA), Louis Oosthuizen (RSA), Jason Scrivener (AUS), Andy Sullivan (ENG), Matt Wallace (ENG), Ashun Wu (CHN)
- 70** — Ryan Fox (NZL), Branden Grace (RSA)
- 71** — Jorge Campillo (ESP), Ross Fisher (ENG), Matthew Fitzpatrick (ENG), Haotong Li (CHN), Shane Lowry (IRL), Andrea Pavan (ITA), Tapio Puulkkanen (FIN), Lee Westwood (ENG)
- 72** — Dean Burmester (RSA), Richard McEvoy (ENG), Rory McIlroy (NIR), Joakim Lagergren (SWE), Joost Luiten (NED), Chris Paisley (ENG), Renato Paratore (ITA), Aaron Rai (ENG), Matthias Schwab (AUT), Paul Waring (ENG)

FORMULA 1

2009 title loss worse than this season, says Vettel

Reuters
Sao Paulo

Ferrari's **Sebastian Vettel** says missing out on the 2009 Formula One championship still ranks as a more painful moment than losing to his Mercedes rival Lewis Hamilton this season.

Hamilton clinched his fifth title, and fourth in five seasons, in Mexico last month with two races to spare. Vettel is sure to finish the year as runner-up.

"I have been three times now in a position like that with '17, '09 and this year. Probably '09 was the worst one, the lowest point," the German told reporters at the Brazilian Grand Prix yesterday.

"You never know what the next year brings. You never know whether you get another chance," Vettel added.

"Obviously I will work very hard for it, and I am confident it will come but ultimately I don't know. You can't predict. None of those moments were nice."

Vettel finished 2009, his first year with Red Bull, nine points behind Brawn GP's champion Jenson Button in a championship won by the Briton at the penultimate round in Brazil.

He had to wait until 2010 for his first world title and ended up with four in a row from 2010-13 before moving to Ferrari in 2015 while Mercedes began a run of dominance.

The German was also runner-up to Hamilton last year, the first season since the retirement of Mercedes' 2016 world champion Nico Rosberg.



Hamilton has won nine races to Vettel's five in 2018 and went to Mexico with a 70 points advantage and needing only to finish seventh.

With that title decided, Mercedes now have to wrap up the constructors' crown for the fifth year in a row and will do so at Interlagos on Sunday providing Ferrari do not score 13 points more than them.

Vettel said the Italian team, still Formula One's most successful of all time, believed they could "have at least a word" in the outcome.

"We try everything we can. We go flat out and try and score more points so that's everything we can do," he said.

"We've seen in the last race how quickly things can change when you struggle with tyres and so on, we've been on that side as well. We keep our head down and try our best.

"I still have a mission here and want to win so that doesn't change. The last race was a tough one to swallow, and probably the winter will be as well, but giving up is not an option."

Hamilton no fan of Formula 1 calendar expansion

Five times world champion Lewis Hamilton feels Formula One risks having too many races and should go back to a shorter season. Speaking yesterday ahead of the Brazilian Grand Prix, and a day after the sport announced Vietnam will join the calendar in April 2020, the Mercedes driver told reporters he would prefer fewer rounds. This season has 21 races, as does 2019, but Formula One has also been talking to Miami for a US street race and Zandvoort in the Netherlands about a return to the coastal circuit last visited in 1985. "It already feels like we are on race 25 this year, so I don't think that's a good thing personally," said Hamilton. "I think 18 was probably the best back in the day," added the 33-year-old. "I'm someone who really loves

racing but the season is long. It's a lot of commitment for all of us and a lot of time away from families and the seasons are getting longer and the off time is getting shorter." Next season will end in December, the latest finish since 1963, but Germany, Britain, Italy and Spain do not as yet have contracts beyond then. Hamilton leads a busy lifestyle but prides himself in having the right balance between his racing and other interests, particularly in fashion and music. He said, however, that it was still tough to find time to switch off and recover. "The turnaround is so short, you start preparing for your next season often as soon as the season is done," said the champion. "It's most likely I'm not going to be here when it gets to 25 that's for sure."

SPOTLIGHT

No.1 Jutanugarn seizes LPGA lead ahead of sister

AFP
Shanghai

Thailand's world number one **Ariya Jutanugarn** seized the outright lead at the halfway stage of the \$2.1mn Blue Bay LPGA in China yesterday — with her sister in hot pursuit.

Ariya carded four-under-par 68 to go seven under for the tournament in blustery Hainan, an island in southern China, with sister Moriya tied in second and four shots off.

Moriya, who at age 24 is 16 months older than her sibling, shared second place with Jennifer Song of the United States and Mexico's Gaby Lopez.

Ariya is chasing an 11th victory on the US-based LPGA Tour and, having started the day in joint second, surged to the summit with seven birdies against three bogeys.

Ariya said that she has a combustible relationship with Moriya, but is relishing the prospect of fighting it out with her sister on the golf course.

"I think (it is) going to be so much fun," she said. "We stay together this week..."



we woke up same time like both days already. We walk to the course together.

"I think we (are) very nice to each other when we're on the golf course, but off the golf course I think we (are) not nice to each other."

Song, ranked 48th in the world, said she enjoyed playing the role of hunter.

"I'm excited, I think I play better when I'm chasing from behind," she said.

Overnight leader Thidapa Suwannapura, another Thai, struggled in the hot and windy conditions and shot a 75, falling to tied sixth.

RUGBY

England clash bigger than Lions series, says All Blacks' Hansen

Tomorrow's match will be the first time world champions New Zealand have met England since a 24-21 All Blacks win at Twickenham in 2014

AFP
London

New Zealand coach Steve Hansen has insisted the All Blacks' clash with England this weekend is even bigger than last year's series against the British and Irish Lions. Tomorrow's match will be the first time world champions New Zealand have met England since a 24-21 All Blacks win at Twickenham in 2014 and the long-anticipated fixture has been given added spice ahead of next year's World Cup in Japan.

The Lions upset the odds to draw a three-match series 1-1, frustrating a New Zealand team and rugby public who have grown up in an environment where anything other than victory by the All Blacks represents failure.

"I think (the England match is) even bigger actually," Hansen told reporters at New Zealand's hotel in London yesterday. "I think the Lions tour has made it bigger because we weren't successful. In only drawing the series, that wasn't successful to us. That's made this week have a sharper edge to it, which is good."

He added: "You've got to be reasonably stupid if you can't work out this is going to be big. There's 80,000 people (in the stadium), it's all over the papers, everyone's talking about it, you can't get a ticket. You'd have to be on holiday, I reckon, if you didn't work out that this is going to be big. And we haven't got anybody on holiday this week."

England made a superb start under coach Eddie Jones after he signed on in November 2015. The Australian won his first 17 games in charge as England, who had marked the end of predecessor Stuart Lancaster's reign with a 'meaningless' pool victory over Uruguay as they crashed out of the 2015 World Cup on home soil, equalled the All Blacks' world record of 18 consecutive wins by a major Test-match nation.

However, England lost five full internationals in a row before seeing off the Springboks in the third and final Test in South Africa in June. And England were far from convincing when launching their November campaign with a 12-11 win over South Africa at Twickenham last weekend. England last beat New Zealand in November 2012 when they ran out 38-21 winners at Twickenham. But Hansen, a former assistant coach at Wales, says recent England setbacks will mean nothing come tomorrow.

"I don't know who's writing them (England) off, it would be foolish to do



New Zealand head coach Steve Hansen arrives for team's training session in London yesterday. (Reuters)

that," said Hansen. "But does it put pressure on us? No. There's already pressure on us, the one constant thing about being in the All Blacks is you're under pressure because you're expected to win every Test match you play and not only win it, win it really, really well. It does at times give you an advantage because when other teams get put under pressure of having to win big games, they haven't experienced that as much as maybe we have."

Hansen has picked his strongest-available team, with prop Karl Tu'inukuafu replacing the luckless Joe Moody, who suffered a cut eye in training. Meanwhile Jack Goodhue, recovered from a bout of glandular fever, will partner Sonny Bill Williams in midfield. The All Blacks will again be captained by No 8 Kieran Read, with Beauden Barrett looking to pull the strings at fly-half. There is bound to be plenty of attention on Williams follow-

ing his red card during the second Test against the Lions, a dismissal that helped the tourists level the series.

Hansen insisted the centre did not carry any scars from being sent-off. "He doesn't have any demons and he hasn't got any devils or anything running around in his head. He was disappointed obviously. He did a shoulder-charge that hit someone in the chops and he got red-carded and rightly so," he said.

SPOTLIGHT

'Write Australia off at your peril', warns Wales coach Gatland

AFP
Cardiff, United Kingdom

Wales might be the bookmakers' odds-on favourite for tomorrow's Test match against Australia, but coach Warren Gatland has warned about writing off the "fully loaded" Wallabies. In his first autumn campaign, in 2008, after he had taken over as Wales coach, New Zealander Gatland guided his team to a rare victory over Australia in Cardiff.

Since then, however, there has been a streak of 13 losses to the southern hemisphere team. And Gatland was keen to play down expectations, with his side on a six-match winning streak and Australia only having won two of their six matches in the Rugby Championship.

"The one thing about Australian teams is that you write them off at your peril," said the former Waikato hooker. "They're competitors in whatever sport. They realise the pressure that is being put on them in terms of coming up to the northern hemisphere and having a successful autumn campaign. That is pretty evident that is the message that is being delivered to them."

Gatland added: "We are aware of that, but we can only control what's in front of us and our own preparation and look forward to us building over the last eight to 10 months."

Australia coach Michael Cheika made four changes to his side for the Principality Stadium clash, Gatland saying his counterpart had picked a "pretty strong team".

"I think they've picked their strongest team," he said.

"They've made a few changes, but I think it's a sign of respect and one that this Welsh team have earned over the years. "Teams used to be comfortable putting out second string sides against Wales, they don't do that anymore, they come fully loaded and Australia are fully loaded for Saturday."

Gatland admitted that the game could well be decided at the breakdown, with Australia fielding two of the world's leading jacklers in Michael Hooper and David Pocock. "We're very conscious of that area of the game," he said.

"We know the threat of Hooper and Pocock on the ball. We need to make sure we have very limited separation between the ball carrier and the player cleaning out. We have been working on that and hopefully we can make another step up. I thought our contact work was very good last week (in the 21-10 victory over Scotland). So we need to make sure those aspects of our game are good."

Cheika insisted that his team's recent record over Wales was not relevant. "Every game is played on its merits," he said. "If you want to find a pattern, you can find one anywhere. Wales have had a few wins in a row and are up to third in the world, which is really good for them."

"They are in top form and it will be up to us to show how we play the game. I will say this is as good as I have seen us come to Europe in terms of conditioning in the last few years. We are pretty hungry after an indifferent season and there is a really good feeling in the camp. Everyone has been training hard and there has been a bit of niggles. It's been good - I've enjoyed it."



In his first autumn campaign, in 2008, after he had taken over as Wales coach, New Zealander Warren Gatland guided his team to a rare victory over Australia in Cardiff.

TENNIS

Osaka receives a hero's welcome in Haiti



US open champion Naomi Osaka receives a painting as she visits a sports centre on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. (Reuters)

Agencies
Haiti

Naomi Osaka returned to Haiti for the first time since winning the US Open in September, with the authorities hopeful she can inspire a new generation of young athletes. Osaka has received a warm reception on her return to Haiti following a hugely successful 2018 season. The 21-year-old climbed to WTA World No 5 and lifted her first major honour when she won the

US Open in September.

Born in Osaka to a Japanese mother and a Haitian father, she visited her birthland soon after winning the Grand Slam event but has now flown to Haiti following a government invitation. Initially, she was enigmatic over her plans, posting a cryptic message on Instagram indicating that she was going to a secret location.

Soon, however, the cat was out of the bag, with social media going crazy over her arrival in the Caribbean, where she was treated to a warm welcome.

FOCUS

England coach Jones adds spice to haka debate

Reuters
Bagshot, England

Eddie Jones says the discussion about whether the Twickenham crowd should respect or drown out the All Blacks' haka had no relevance to him, adding that the Spice Girls could be singing for all the attention he will give the issue. England face New Zealand for the first time in four years tomorrow and the vast majority of the 82,000 crowd will belt out the loudest-possible rendition of their "Swing Low" anthem to drown out the pre-match haka war-dance performed by the visitors.

The sport's governing body World Rugby has instructed teams to respect the



traditional challenge, where the players poke out their tongues, bulge their eyes and slap their thighs in an attempt to unsettle their opponents.

Teams have tried various ways to deal with it, including nose to nose confrontation and declining to face it, and the

England fans' response divides opinion. Asked where he stood on the issue, Australian Jones told reporters: "At that stage of the game, they could be playing the Spice Girls and I wouldn't know what's being played. They're making a comeback aren't they, the Spice girls? Maybe they could sing at that time. It's got no relevance to me at all."

The hugely successful British all-girl band of the late 1990s announced this week that they will get back together for a tour next year.

ETZEBETH OUT OF SPRINGBOK SIDE TO FACE FRANCE

South African lock forward Eben Etzebeth will miss tomorrow's one-off Test against France after failing to recover

from an ankle injury. Etzebeth will be replaced by Franco Mostert, one of three changes announced by coach Rassie Erasmus to the side that lost 12-11 in controversial fashion at Twickenham.

Full-back Willie le Roux and scrum-half Faf de Klerk also come into the starting XV in place of Damian Willemse and Ivan van Zyl.

Etzebeth was injured during the defeat at Twickenham and initially ruled out of the Paris game only for Erasmus to raise the possibility on Monday that the 27-year-old may be fit after all.

Like new Gloucester recruit Mostert, Le Roux and de Klerk were not at Twickenham as the match fell outside the recognised international window and they were retained by their English clubs.

Depleted Czech, US teams to clash in Fed Cup final

Prague: Defending champions the United States are targeting a record-extending 11th Fed Cup victory when they face the Czech Republic in a Prague final set to be missing key players. Sloane Stephens, Serena Williams and Madison Keys are missing on the US squad while a torn calf has ruled out Karolina Pliskova from the Czech team and doubts linger over two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova.

US captain Kathy Rinaldi has called on world number 36 Danielle Collins, 52nd-ranked Sofia Kenin and 63rd-ranked Alison Riske alongside the Czech-born 15th-ranked doubles player Nicole Melichar. All but Riske will make their Fed Cup debut on the hardcourt of Prague's

15,000-capacity O2 Arena, which is sold out for tomorrow and Sunday.

"We're going to go out there one match at a time and really compete," said Rinaldi, who steered the USA to victory last year beating Belarus in the final and the Czechs in the semi-final.

"Obviously these are two teams with the most history in the Fed Cup, the best record, so it's very exciting," she added.

Boasting 18 trophies, the USA is the most successful team in Fed Cup history, with the Czech Republic second on the list with 10 including five as the former Czechoslovakia. The hosts are also second best in terms of head-to-head, winning only two of their previous 12 meetings against the Americans.

Led by Kvitova and Pliskova, the Czechs have won five of the last seven editions including all three finals they have played on Prague's hardcourt.

With Pliskova sidelined, the focus is now on world number seven Kvitova, although doubts linger after she skipped Wednesday's training after grappling with a high temperature following a course of antibiotics last week.

Czech captain Petr Pala insisted it did not mean Kvitova would not be fit to compete. "Nothing seems to suggest she won't be ready at the weekend, and no one has yet conceded that she won't play," Pala said. Kvitova will join the world's top doubles pair of Barbora Krejčíková and Katerina Siniakova, who is

also ranked 31st for singles, and Barbora Strycova, the world number 33. Melichar, who speaks fluent Czech, said she was confident the US team would take the honours in the end.

"We have a great team, regardless what the social media says and what it says on paper. I think we can do it," said Melichar, who was born in the second Czech city of Brno but raised in the States. "In sports any given Sunday anything can happen and all these girls play unbelievably well," added the 25-year-old.

"I have tried to teach them a few words here and there and to translate a few things. But no bad words - in fact they haven't even asked yet."

NBA

LeBron and Hart shine as LA Lakers edge Wolves

James added 10 rebounds and nine assists, just missing out on his second triple-double as a member of the Lakers

Field Level Media
Los Angeles

LeBron James scored 24 points, and Kyle Kuzma and Josh Hart had 21 apiece as the Los Angeles Lakers held on in a back-and-forth affair Wednesday to earn a 114-110 victory over the visiting Minnesota Timberwolves.

James added 10 rebounds and nine assists, just missing out on his second triple-double as a member of the Lakers. Brandon Ingram scored 20 points for Los Angeles, which won for the third time in the past four games.

Powered by their veteran backcourt, the Wolves got 31 points from Derrick Rose and 24 from Jimmy Butler. Minnesota remained winless away from home at 0-7, and it dropped its fourth consecutive game overall.

Tyson Chandler made his Lakers debut and finished with two points and six rebounds in 27 minutes. Chandler's contract was bought out by the Phoenix Suns on Sunday, and he signed with Los Angeles on Tuesday.

RAPTORS 114, KINGS 105

Kawhi Leonard, who missed the two previous games with a jammed foot, scored 25 points and grabbed 11 rebounds, and Toronto won at Sacramento. Serge Ibaka added 14 points and 14 rebounds, and Jonas Valanciunas had 11 points and 10 rebounds as the Raptors completed a four-game sweep of a Western swing for the first time in team history to go to 11-1 in their best start in franchise history.

Pascal Siakam had 21 points for Toronto, Kyle Lowry had 16 points and eight assists, and OG Anunoby chipped in with 11 points. Buddy Hield and Willie Cauley-Stein each scored for 24 for the Kings, and De'Aaron Fox added 20.

HEAT 95, SPURS 88

Hassan Whiteside posted 29 points, 20 rebounds and nine blocks to lead host Miami past San Antonio. Whiteside, who missed Miami's previous game due to a knee injury, made 10 of 18 shots from the floor and fell one block short of what would have been the fifth triple-double of his career.

Heat guard Wayne Ellington, who had



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James (23) shoots over Minnesota Timberwolves forward Andrew Wiggins (22) in the first half of their game at Staples Center. **PICTURE:** Richard Mackson- USA TODAY Sports

only played 12 minutes this season prior to Wednesday, made his first start of the season and provided 20 points. He shot 6-for-10 on 3-point attempts as Miami stopped a nine-game losing streak against San Antonio. San Antonio was led by Patty Mills, who had 20 points, and Davis Bertans, who added a season-high 19 points.

76ERS 100, PACERS 94

Joel Embiid had 20 points and 10 rebounds to lift Philadelphia past Indiana in Indianapolis.

Dario Saric scored 18 points and Ben Simmons added 16 points and 10 rebounds as the Sixers won for the first time in six tries on the road this season. The win also snapped an eight-game losing streak at Indiana.

Victor Oladipo scored a season high 36 points to lead the Pacers. Domantas Sabonis added 16 points and 11 rebounds.

PELICANS 107, BULLS 98

Anthony Davis had 32 points and 15 rebounds as host New Orleans ended a six-game losing streak with a victory against Chicago.

Davis, who missed three games and struggled in three others during the losing streak because of an elbow strain, looked his old self as he added seven assists. Jrue Holiday added 17 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists.

Zach LaVine led the Bulls with 22 points, Jabari Parker had 20 points and 13 rebounds, and Wendell Carter Jr. had 17 points and 11 rebounds.

JAZZ 117, MAVERICKS 102

Donovan Mitchell scored 23 points to lead six Utah players in double figures during a win over Dallas at Salt Lake City.

Alec Burks scored 18 points for Utah, and Rudy Gobert had his 10th double-double in 11 games, contributing 17 points and 10 rebounds. The Jazz finally managed to record their first home win in five tries.

Rookie Luka Doncic was Dallas' top scorer, as he poured in 24 points.

GRIZZLIES 89, NUGGETS 87

Marc Gasol hit two tiebreaking free throws with 4.6 seconds remaining, and Memphis survived two late misses by



Memphis Grizzlies guard Mike Conley (11) battles for the ball with Denver Nuggets guard Gary Harris (14) at FedExForum. **PICTURE:** Nelson Chenault- USA TODAY Sports

Denver to remain unbeaten at home.

The Nuggets had one shot at a win and a second at a tie in the final 2.4 seconds, but Nikola Jokic misfired on a 3-point attempt and Murray, after grabbing the rebound, failed to connect on a short jumper just before the final horn.

Gasol and Jaren Jackson Jr. finished with 20 points apiece for the Grizzlies, who improved to 4-0 on the season at home. Gary Harris had 20 points to lead the Nuggets, who had won five straight.

KNICKS 112, HAWKS 107

Tim Hardaway Jr. showed no ill effects from the bad back that caused him to miss the previous game, scoring 34 points to lead New York to a win at Atlanta.

The Knicks also got 17 points and 11 rebounds from Enes Kanter. Allonzo Trier scored 16 points and Frank Ntilikina scored 14 before fouling out.

Atlanta was led by rookie Omari Spellman's 18 points and 10 rebounds, career highs in both categories. Kent Bazemore added 16 points and seven rebounds, and Taurean Price scored 16 points.

THUNDER 95, CAVALIERS 86

Dennis Schroder scored a season-

high 28 points as Oklahoma City picked up its sixth consecutive win, a decision over host Cleveland.

Oklahoma City was playing without point guard Russell Westbrook, who turned his left ankle Monday in a win over the New Orleans Pelicans. Paul George finished with 18 points for the Thunder, and Jerami Grant scored 12 points.

Rookie Collin Sexton scored 15 points to lead Cleveland, which dropped its fourth game in a row.

Pistons 103, Magic 96

Detroit overcame two double-digit deficits to earn a victory at Orlando. The result snapped a five-game losing streak for the Pistons, who had started the season 4-0 before the skid.

Andre Drummond finished with 23 points and 19 rebounds, including 19 points and 12 rebounds before halftime, to lead Detroit. Blake Griffin scored 20 points, and Reggie Jackson added 15.

Evan Fournier, who hit a game-winning shot Monday night against the Cavaliers, scored 27 points Wednesday to lead the Magic. DJ Augustin added 16 points, and Aaron Gordon and Terrence Ross had 15 points apiece.

NHL

Miller stops 37 shots as Anaheim Ducks douse Flames

Field Level Media
Anaheim

Ryan Miller made 37 saves to move into a tie for 17th place on the all-time wins list as the host Anaheim Ducks held off the Calgary Flames for a 3-2 victory on Wednesday night.

With his 372nd career win, Ryan matched the total of Andy Moog, who played with four teams from 1980-98. Miller also moved within two wins of tying John Vanbiesbrouck for the most NHL victories by a United States-born goalie.

Ryan Getzlaf scored the game-winner in the third period for the Ducks, who won for the second time in three games. Anaheim's Jakob Silfverberg and Adam Henrique had first-period goals.

Matthew Tkachuk and Mark Jankowski scored for Calgary, which had its four-game win streak snapped. Mike Smith had 21 saves for the Flames, who have won just once in their past 28 regular-season games in Anaheim dating back to Jan. 19, 2004.

Silfverberg gave Anaheim a 1-0 lead at the 8:37 mark of the first period with his fifth goal of the season. He blasted a slap shot from the top of the right circle that handcuffed Smith, bouncing down off his glove and then trickling through his pads. It marked the first time in eight games that the Ducks scored first.

Henrique made it 2-0 a few minutes later when Smith left a rebound of a Josh Manson shot from the right point to the left side. Henrique then pounced on the loose puck and fired a shot over Smith's blocker for his fourth goal of the season.

Tkachuk cut Calgary's deficit to 2-1 with a power-play goal near the end of the opening period. He deflected an Elias Lindholm shot from the right point with the shaft of his stick and under the



Goalie Ryan Miller of the Anaheim Ducks blocks a shot on goal by Mikael Backlund of the Calgary Flames during the second period of their game at Honda Center in Anaheim on Wednesday.

crossbar for his third goal in four games and seventh of the season.

Jankowski tied it early in the third period with an unassisted short-handed goal, knocking the puck away from Anaheim defenseman Brandon Montour near center ice and then coming in and beating Miller top corner for his first goal of the season.

However, Anaheim came right back to take a 3-2 lead just 27 seconds later. Rickard Rakell drove to the net, and Getzlaf picked up a loose puck to the left of the goal and beat Smith with a backhand on the short side for the game-

winner. Calgary pulled Smith with 2:30 remaining and then had a six-on-four advantage for the final 1:14 after Rakell picked up a slashing penalty on Johnny Gaudreau. The Flames didn't manage a shot until 12 seconds remained, when Tkachuk had a pair of close-in attempts that Miller stopped.

Meanwhile, T.J. Oshie scored with 1:14 left to give the Washington Capitals a 2-1 victory over the visiting Pittsburgh Penguins. The Capitals, who beat the Edmonton Oilers on Monday, won back-to-back games for the first time this season. Pittsburgh, meanwhile has

lost five in a row, the first time that's happened under coach Mike Sullivan.

Oshie, who had been knocked out of the game due to injuries in the first and third periods (stick to the face and shoulder to the face, respectively), came back in time to take a John Carlson pass and beat goalie Casey DeSmith from just outside the crease for the game-winner.

The tally snapped a 1-1 tie and gave Washington the victory in a game where the Penguins applied constant pressure. Pittsburgh outshot Washington 42-22, but Penguins goalie Braden Holtby came up big with 41 saves.

Raptors guard Powell reportedly out 4-6 weeks

Toronto: Toronto Raptors guard Norman Powell is out indefinitely after sustaining a left shoulder subluxation on Monday, the team announced Wednesday.

The team said there is no timeline for Powell's return, but ESPN reported he will miss four to six weeks.

Powell was hurt in the second quarter of Monday's game against the Utah Jazz, leaving shortly after he entered. He went down after trying to take the ball from Jazz centre Rudy Gobert and appeared to be in significant pain.

Powell has averaged 5.0 points and 2.0 rebounds in 14.9 minutes per game for the Raptors, who are tied with the Golden State Warriors with the NBA's best record at 10-1. The 25-year-old has career averages of 6.5 points, 2.0 rebounds and 1.1 assists in 16.1 minutes per game



over four NBA seasons, all with the Raptors. The team had been without forward Kawhi Leonard for two games due to a foot injury, but Leonard returned Wednesday night to face the Sacramento Kings.

Lucic escapes ban for 'cheap shot' on Tampa rookie

Los Angeles: Edmonton Oilers player Milan Lucic has escaped a suspension following an unprovoked attack on Tampa Bay Lightning rookie Mathieu Joseph in an NHL contest on Tuesday night.

The 11-year veteran Lucic was not banned, but he was handed a \$10,000 fine for hitting the 21-year-old Joseph when he didn't have the puck and then punching him as Lucic jumped on top of him. Joseph, who covered up to protect himself from the attack, was not seriously hurt on the play which sparked a couple of other pushing and shoving matches as several of his teammates rushed to his aid. Lucic was assessed two minor

penalties for interference and roughing along with a 10-minute misconduct for the incident, which took place halfway through the third period of Edmonton's 5-2 loss to the Lightning.

Tampa Bay captain Steven Stamkos described Lucic's attack as a "cheap shot". "You never want to see a guy take a cheap shot where it is premeditated like that," said Stamkos. "I wasn't a big fan of how he went after an unsuspecting player like that and hit him with a blindside hit." The NHL's disciplinary department said in a news release that the fine was the maximum amount allowed under the players' collective bargaining agreement.



NFL

To make playoffs, Seahawks need Russell Wilson to be better than good

The loss to the Chargers was a reminder of what has been true for a few years: If Wilson doesn't play well, Seattle doesn't win

By Matt Calkins
The Seattle Times

We've seen a resurgence in a running game that has become one of the best in the NFL. We've seen the re-emergence of a defense that is now among the league's stingiest. We've seen the blossoming of an offensive line that has gone from joke to juggernaut.

But despite all upgrades, one thing remains true of the Seahawks: They'll go only as far as Russell Wilson takes them.

It's easy to see why No. 3 might be taken for granted sometimes. Blowouts notwithstanding, Wilson has missed only one snap in his professional career.

He also has been the beneficiary of Marshawn Lynch and some of the best defensive teams in NFL history.

Even so, I think it's fair to ask: Is there any player in the league more vital to his team's success than Russell?

Sunday's loss to the Chargers was a reminder of what has been true for a few years: If Wilson doesn't play well, Seattle doesn't win.

That doesn't necessarily mean the Seahawks will come out victorious if he brings his "A" game, as the Rams game last month indicated. But as the losses to the Broncos, Bears and Chargers have shown, if Wilson is just OK, the Seahawks aren't all right.

From a stagnant running game to a host of explosive plays allowed, there was plenty to criticize in Seattle's 25-17 loss Sunday. But that doesn't change the fact that two errant throws by Wilson likely changed the outcome.

The first came when he under-threw a wide open Jaron Brown on a go route that probably would have ended in a touchdown. The second came when he gave up a pick-six in the fourth quarter that all but sealed the Chargers victory.

Maybe it's unfair to expect Wilson to be nearly perfect every time he steps on the field. But the reality is that he has to be if the Seahawks are going to contend.

Yes, a newfound focus on the ground game was a major factor in the Seahawks winning four of the five games they played before Sunday. And yes, Wilson threw just 17



times in Seattle's 14-point win over Detroit.

But a big reason the Seahawks have been able to run the ball so efficiently is because of the threat Wilson presents. Is he the NFL's most valuable player? No. But I'm not sure any team depends on one player more.

Sentences such as the one above likely don't go over well in the Seahawks locker room. Stories from both ESPN and *Sports Illustrated*

have highlighted some jealousy that Wilson's star power begets.

But the truth is the truth: If Russell is off his game, an "L" is on the horizon.

With the Seahawks at 4-4 at the midway point, it's not a stretch to say the next couple games could define their season.

And if they are able to pull out victories against either of those teams, it will be because their quarterback played at a first-tier level. Perform-

ances such as the one Sunday just won't cut it.

As Wilson himself said after Sunday's loss: "One, two, three plays here or there, and we feel like we'd be celebrating in the locker room right now."

The thing is, Russell is the one who could have made those two or three plays to change the result.

The Seahawks probably (certainly?) never would have won a Super Bowl if Russell Wilson didn't come

along. But the team's hierarchy has changed since those championship days, with Wilson sitting at the top of the totem pole.

He has achieved great success as a guy for the Seahawks, but I'm not sure he's had that moment as the guy.

The second half of this season will present that opportunity for Wilson. For the Seahawks to have any chance at the playoffs, he has to be great.

After knocking off the Cubs in NL Central, Brewers primed for encore

By Paul Sullivan
Chicago Tribune

The Cubs ended their season with a thud, blowing the division to the Brewers and losing in the wild-card game to the Rockies.

President Theo Epstein vowed to fix a "broke" offense in the offseason and now has to figure out whether to make changes in the outfield and bullpen, along with the ongoing question of whether to give suspended shortstop Addison Russell a chance at redemption.

Up I-94 on the other side of the border, the Brewers won 96 games, a division title and wound up one game shy of going to their first World Series since 1982, leaving the organization optimistic about its future.

But as the general managers meetings continue in Southern California, nothing seems to have changed from last year's meetings in Orlando, Fla. It still feels as if the Brewers are the little guys chasing the Cubs, the big-market team with more stars, more resources and much more media attention — just the way the Brewers like it. They may be top dogs in the National League Central, but the Brewers know they can't afford to be complacent this offseason.

"Now you want to stay there," Brewers general manager David Stearns said. "It's hard to get there and even harder to do back-to-back years and stay there. The Cubs were a really good team in 2018, and I think they're probably going to be better in 2019."

"They're certainly not going to be satisfied with their season this year. We know that, so we have a tremendous amount of work ahead of us if we want to stay at the top of the division."

The Brewers drew 2.85 million to Miller Park this year, finishing 10th in the majors despite Milwaukee being a small market. The increase of more than 300,000 from 2017 should lead to an increased payroll, though Stearns skirted the question when asked if they will spend more this offseason.

"Certainly (owner Mark Attanasio) and our ownership group have proven that where there's an investment that makes sense from a baseball perspective, they're going to be supportive," he said.

Last offseason Stearns made the bold move on Jan. 25 to sign Lorenzo Cain to a five-year, \$80 million deal while acquiring Marlins outfielder Christian Yelich for prospects. Yelich is the likely NL MVP, and Cain finished fourth among position players in the league with a 5.7 WAR.

Don't expect lightning to strike twice. "I think it's unlikely we have a similar offseason to what we did last year," he said. "We committed over \$150 million last year to Cain, Yelich and Jhoulys Chacin. That's far and away the largest financial commitment this organization has ever made in a single offseason, so I think it'd be unrealistic to replicate that." In truth, the Brewers don't need much.

Most of the regular lineup is back, as is the dominant bullpen that proved to be the strength of the team. Starter Jimmy Nelson is set to return after missing 2018 because of shoulder surgery, and they could insert relievers in Brandon Woodruff and Corbin Burnes into the rotation without missing a beat, especially considering the way manager Craig Counsell uses his bullpen.

And they have Josh Hader, the most dominant middle reliever in baseball, to make up for the lack of a star-studded rotation.

"If you're a team like the Cubs that has some more established starting pitching, some guys that traditionally go a little bit farther later in games, you can afford to have a specialist or two in the bullpen," Stearns said. Relievers are notoriously fickle, so what's up could be down in 2019. Stearns knows that, and the Cubs experienced it as well.

"Bullpens are particularly volatile year to year," he said. "There's a tremendous amount of variability from year to year in performance from bullpens. We've been fortunate that a number of our relievers have come up internally, so we've gotten to know them. ... Matt Albers was one of the best relievers in baseball through mid-May, then had a really challenging second half."

"So you never know when guys are going to go on their runs or guys are going to struggle, so you just want as many options as possible."

The Brewers seemingly have enough pitching depth that should make them playoff contenders again, even if the Cubs are likely to be picked by the experts to recapture the division, just because they're the Cubs.

BOTTOMLINE

Patricia defends offensive line after 10-sack game

By Carlos Monarrez
Detroit Free Press

Lions coach Matt Patricia stood behind his offensive line and offered the team's most maligned unit his full-throated support three days after quarterback Matthew Stafford was sacked a career-high 10 times.

"I like our offensive line a lot," Patricia said Wednesday. "These guys work extremely hard. The offensive line is a hard group to play in. ..."

"But I would say our group works extremely hard every single day to get better and I think if you look at the overall picture of what we're talking about, this group has been one of the groups of our team that has gotten much better in the course of a year. I think we would all agree that this offensive line has gotten a lot better

and that's a positive."

The offensive line has appeared — at times — to improve from last season under offensive line coach Jeff Davidson, who replaced Ron Prince. But on Sunday, the Lions had no answer for stemming the Minnesota Vikings' pass rush early or with halftime adjustments. Minnesota sacked Stafford four times in the second quarter and six times in the second half.

"Look, no one likes a game that we had on Sunday," Patricia said. "Certainly not a good situation for us there. There's a lot of contributing factors to something like that. But I think, again, it's a full team game so probably should have done something better all the way around to help everybody because obviously we didn't win and that's the main thing is trying to win."

"But I would say from the offensive line standpoint, come to work every single day,

grinding it out, trying to get better, really trying to learn the techniques and trying to improve. It's probably one of the best groups that we have that's trying to do that every single day."

Right tackle Rick Wagner struggled mightily and gave up three sacks to Vikings defensive end Danielle Hunter. Wagner might be in for another tough task when the Lions visit Chicago on Sunday, although the status of outside linebacker Khalil Mack is uncertain. He has missed the past two games with a right ankle injury, but he did practice Wednesday.

"I think Rick's done a really good job this year," Patricia said in a conference call with Chicago reporters. "I think he's worked extremely hard and he's gone out and played at a good level. And I think obviously all the way across the board as a team, I think we all need to be improving and we

need to get better and more consistent. ..."

"But I'd say in general I think Rick's really trying to approach this year and has done a good job improving from the offseason to training camp to the regular season."

Despite all the Vikings' success, Bears coach Matt Nagy said Wednesday he didn't necessarily see a trend his team could copy against the Lions.

"No, every game's different," Nagy said. "There's just so much darn parity in this league and teams match up certain ways against each other. That's obviously a lot of sacks but at the same time it could be completely different."

"And so we don't really focus in on that. We try to just home in on our strengths as a team and try to get our weaknesses better. But I think they've got great coaches over their Detroit and good players. It's going to be a great challenge for us!"





SPOTLIGHT

Southgate defends decision to honour Rooney

AFP
London

Gareth Southgate defended the decision to honour Wayne Rooney by fielding England's top international goalscorer in a friendly against the USA at Wembley next week. The Football Association announced on Sunday that Rooney would be awarded his 120th cap as a tribute to his England career which appeared to have come to an end when he retired from international football in August 2017.

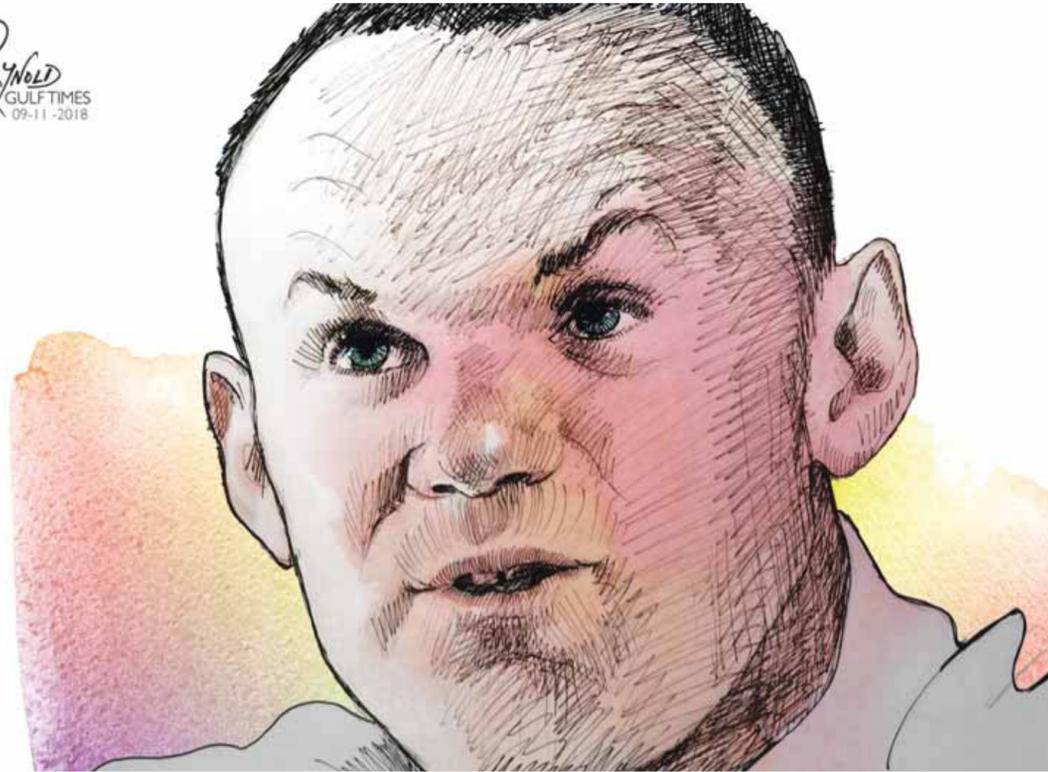
That decision has been criticised in the English media with a number of exciting young prospects needing more game time to be tested at the international level and the USA game seen as preparation for what could be a crucial Nations League decider against Croatia four days later.

"I am still able to look to the future in terms of the squad we have picked," insisted Southgate. "But also I have talked a lot to the players about the importance of the shirt, the history of the shirt, honouring the former players, and I think all the players would respect that Wayne's contribution deserves the best possible send-off. I understand that has caused debate but for me it is a small way of appreciating what he has given to his country."

Rooney, 33, scored 53 goals in his previous 119 caps. However, he failed to carry his country to the level of success they enjoyed under Southgate at the World Cup this year by reaching the semi-finals. The former Manchester United captain has starred for DC United since moving to Major League Soccer in June.

But Southgate confirmed that Rooney wouldn't start the match or wear the number 10 shirt, but could be handed the captain's armband as a substitute. "He won't wear number 10 because he won't start the game," added Southgate. "When he came on in his last game, Jordan Henderson ran over and gave him the armband. I guess that it will depend on the circumstances of the game and the players who are out there but I have no issue with that."

Bournemouth striker Callum Wilson is rewarded for his fine start to the campaign with a first England call-up among a bumper 28-man squad named yesterday. No English player has scored more than Wilson's six Premier League goals so far this season.



"He's a threat in terms of running in behind defences. He's been involved with either scoring or assists, with a high number of goals this season, so it's a good opportunity for us to have a look at him and see how he fits into what we do," said Southgate.

After beating Spain 3-2 in Seville last month, England could progress to the semi-finals of the inaugural Nations League with victory over Croatia if Spain fail to win in Zagreb on November 15.

ENGLAND SQUAD:

Goalkeepers: Marcus Bettinelli (Fulham), Jack Butland (Stoke City), Alex McCarthy (Southampton), Jordan Pickford (Everton)

Defenders: Trent Alexander-Arnold (Liverpool), Ben Chilwell (Leicester City), Lewis Dunk (Brighton), Joe Gomez (Liverpool), Michael Keane (Everton), Luke Shaw (Manchester United), John Stones (Manchester City), Kieran Trippier (Tottenham Hotspur), Kyle Walker (Manchester City)

Midfielders: Dele Alli (Tottenham), Ross Barkley (Chelsea), Fabian Delph (Manchester City), Eric Dier (Tottenham Hotspur), Jordan Henderson (Liverpool), Jesse Lingard (Manchester United), Ruben Loftus-Cheek (Chelsea), Harry Winks (Tottenham)

Forwards: Marcus Rashford (Manchester United), Wayne Rooney (DC United/USA), Jadon Sancho (Borussia Dortmund/GER), Harry Kane (Tottenham), Danny Welbeck (Arsenal), Callum Wilson (Bournemouth), Raheem Sterling (Manchester City)

Man Utd's Martial earns recall to France squad

Anthony Martial has been rewarded for his impressive recent form with Manchester United by being recalled to the France squad by coach Didier Deschamps. Martial, who has scored five goals in United's last four Premier League games, comes in for France's Nations League match in the Netherlands on November 16 and their home friendly against Uruguay four days later. Martial, 22, was not in the France squad that won the World Cup in Russia. Benjamin Mendy, Nabil Fekir and Adil Rami also return to the squad after missing last month's friendly against Iceland and the Nations League win against Germany.

Ronaldo still out of Portugal squad

Juventus star Cristiano Ronaldo was left on the sidelines again as expected by Portugal coach Fernando Santos who named his squad yesterday for Nations League games against Italy and Poland. Ronaldo was initially left off Portugal's squads earlier this season as he tried to settle into life in Turin following his summer move from Real Madrid. But the five-time Ballon d'Or winner spent much of last month vehemently denying allegations of rape by former American model Kathryn Mayorga, 34 on June 13, 2009, just before he joined Real Madrid from Manchester United.

Ankle injury rules out Spurs' Dembele till 2019

Tottenham midfielder Mousa Dembele is likely to miss the rest of the year due to ankle ligament damage, Spurs confirmed. The 31-year-old will also miss Belgium's Nations League matches against Iceland and Switzerland later this month. Dembele is just one of many of Spurs' World Cup stars to have suffered injury in the early part of the season. Dele Alli, Christian Eriksen, Danny Rose, Jan Vertonghen and Eric Dier have also been sidelined at different stages. Pochettino should be able to welcome back midfield duo Dier and Victor Wanyama for Saturday's visit to Crystal Palace. However, Rose and Vertonghen remain out.

Ceferin poised for UEFA re-election

Incumbent Aleksander Ceferin is virtually assured re-election as UEFA president after European football's ruling body confirmed he is the sole candidate for next February's elections. Slovenian Ceferin, a lawyer, has held the post since 2016 when he replaced former France legend Michel Platini, who was forced to resign several months previously following confirmation of his suspension by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). UEFA had set a date limit of November 7 for potential candidates to formally express interest ahead of the February 7, 2019 election in Rome.

Defender Jordi Alba returns to Spain squad

Spain coach Luis Enrique ended the recent controversy over defender Jordi Alba by recalling the Barcelona left-back for an upcoming Nations League match against Croatia and a friendly with Bosnia. Enrique, a former coach of Alba at Barcelona, courted controversy when he left Alba out of his first squad announcement in September. Alba had been in the midst of a strong start to the season with the Catalan giants and many, including Spain stars Gerard Pique and Sergio Ramos, felt Enrique had been wide of the mark when he left him out for games against England, Croatia and Wales.

Injured Coutinho out for two, three weeks: Barca

Barcelona midfielder Philippe Coutinho has a muscle tear and will be out for two to three weeks, the Spanish La Liga giants said. The 26-year-old Brazilian will miss Sunday's clash against Real Betis. But the Catalan club, currently top of La Liga table, are expected to welcome star forward Lionel Messi back following a three-week absence with a broken arm. Coutinho will also miss Brazil's friendlies against Uruguay and Cameroon on November 16 and 20 respectively. He could potentially also miss Barcelona's match against Atletico Madrid on November 24.

Mourinho claims he 'didn't insult' Juventus

Jose Mourinho insisted his provocative celebration of Manchester United's dramatic 2-1 Champions League win at Juventus wasn't meant to insult the Italian club. Mourinho's side snatched a vital victory in Turin thanks to two goals in the last four minutes. Mourinho responded in typically controversial fashion as the United manager marched onto the pitch at the final whistle with his hand cupped to one ear. "In a beautiful Italian city, they insulted me for 90 minutes. I didn't insult them. I just made a little thing. I know the millions of Inter fans are happy with that. But I respect Juventus, their players, the manager."

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Man United stun Juventus as City, Real enjoy big wins

Bayern require just one more point to advance into last 16 after 2-0 home win over AEK Athens

AFP
Paris

Manchester United produced a stunning late comeback to beat Juventus 2-1 on Wednesday night in what could be a turning point in their Champions League campaign, while a Gabriel Jesus hat-trick helped Manchester City all but secure a last-16 berth.

Pep Guardiola's City crushed Shakhtar Donetsk 6-0 on a night which saw Real Madrid also win big, as Bayern Munich closed in on a place in the knockout stage. Juventus were within seconds of confirming their spot in the last 16 after Cristiano Ronaldo put them ahead in Turin with a superb volley in the 65th minute.

The hosts had already hit the woodwork twice before that and should have been out of sight before Juan Mata equalised from an 86th-minute free-kick. The turnaround was completed in the 90th minute when Leonardo Bonucci scored an own-goal, and United boss Jose Mourinho delighted in taking to the field at the end, cupping an ear towards the home support.

The former Inter coach said it was a response to insults from Juve supporters, and United are now two points behind the Italians in Group H. "In a beautiful Italian city, they insulted me for 90 minutes. I didn't insult them. I just made a little thing," Mourinho said. "It is a big victory for us, not just because we needed the points but because it was away from home against an amazing team."

The result was a blow for Valencia, who are still two points behind in third after beating Young Boys 3-1 at Mestalla. Santi Mina scored twice either side of a Roger Assale goal, before Carlos Soler sealed the win. Young Boys, who had Sekou Sanogo sent off, cannot now qualify. There was less drama at the Etihad Stadium, where City - whose financial dealings have come under scrutiny in a series of Football Leaks allegations - eased to their biggest win in the competition. Goals from David Silva and Riyad Mahrez bookended the victory.

In between there was a stunner from Raheem Sterling, who was also awarded a penalty for kicking his own foot into the turf in the box. Jesus scored the spot-kick, the first of two pen-



Manchester United's Juan Mata (right) rejoices after scoring against Juventus in the Champions League group H match in Turin on Wednesday night. (AFP)

alties in his hat-trick. City will head to Lyon later this month requiring a draw to secure a last-16 place. "Unfortunately we haven't qualified, but we are so close and will try to maintain this level," said Guardiola, whose team play United on Sunday.

City would have been through already had Lyon not squandered a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 at home to 10-man Hoffenheim. Nabil Fekir and Tanguy Ndombele had the French club 2-0 up at the break, and the Germans had Kasim Nuhu sent off early in the second half. But Andrej Kramaric pulled one back and Lyon missed chances to secure the victory before Pavel Kaderabek's stoppage-time equaliser. Reigning European champions Madrid had no trouble against

Viktoria Plzen in the Czech Republic, with Karim Benzema scoring twice in a 5-0 win. Real were four ahead at the break, Benzema's goals taking him to 200 for the club.

Casemiro and Gareth Bale also netted in the first half, and Toni Kroos completed the scoring with a delicious chip. Santiago Solari has now overseen three victories, all with clean sheets, since being put in charge of Madrid, and the Spaniards are level atop Group G with Roma. The Italians won 2-1 away to CSKA Moscow, Kostas Manolas and Lorenzo Pellegrini scoring their goals either side of Arnor Sigurdsson's equaliser. CSKA, who had Hordur Magnusson sent off, still have a slim chance of qualifying, but Plzen are out.

Meanwhile, Bayern require just one more point to advance in Group E after Robert Lewandowski netted twice - the first a penalty - on his 100th European appearance in a 2-0 home win over AEK Athens, who are eliminated. Ajax remain well placed to progress too. They are second, four points clear of third-placed Benfica, after a 1-1 draw in Portugal. Jonas put Benfica ahead before Dusan Tadic equalised.

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE RESULTS ON WEDNESDAY

Group E: At Lisbon: Benfica (POR) 1 (Jonas 29) Ajax (NED) 1 (Tadic 61); At Munich, Germany: Bayern Munich (GER) 2 (Lewandowski 31, 71) AEK Athens (GRE) 0

Group F: At Lyon, France: Lyon (FRA) 2 (Fekir 19, Ndombele 28) Hoffenheim (GER) 2 (Kramaric 65, Kaderabek 90+2); At Manchester, England: Manchester City (ENG) 6 (D. Silva 13, Jesus 24-pen, 72-pen, 90+2, Sterling 49, Mahrez 84) Shakhtar Donetsk (UKR) 0

Group G: At Moscow: CSKA Moscow (RUS) 1 (Sigurdsson 50) Roma (ITA) 2 (Manolas 4, Pellegrini 59); At Plzen, Czech Republic: Viktoria Plzen (CZE) 0 Real Madrid (ESP) 5 (Benzema 21, 37, Casemiro 23, Bale 40, Kroos 67)

Group H: At Valencia, Spain: Valencia (ESP) 3 (Santi Mina 14, 42, Soler 56) Young Boys (SUI) 1 (Assale 37); At Turin, Italy: Juventus (ITA) 1 (Ronaldo 65) Manchester United (ENG) 2 (Mata 86, Bonucci 90-og)

QNB STARS LEAGUE

Boundedjah and El Arabi power Al Sadd, Duhail

BOTH RECORD HAT-TRICKS AS QATAR GIANTS HAMMER MINNOMS

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Baghdad Boundedjah struck another hat-trick to boost his overall tally to 19 goals this season as Al Sadd beat Al Kharaitiyat 7-1 in the QNB Stars League at the Al Sadd Stadium yesterday.

Boundedjah scored in the 17th, 46th and 87th minutes as the hosts raced to a comfortable victory.

Hamed Ismail (28th), Abdulkareem Hassan (37th), Akram Afif (64th-min penalty) and Ahmad Sayyar (89th) also scored for Al Sadd.

Mahmoud Saad reduced the deficit with a left-footed low drive in the 82nd minute for Al Kharaitiyat.

Boundedjah opened the scoring following a fumble by Al Kharaitiyat keeper Ahmed Sofyan. Ismail slipped in a cross from the flank but instead of grabbing the ball, keeper Sofyan let it slip out. Boundedjah easily fired home from close range.

Ismail doubled the lead with a neat strike. Hassan then contributed the team's third goal with a left-footed drive from close range.

Boundedjah scored his second of the match and 18th of the season as Al Sadd raced to a 4-0 lead soon after resumption of play in the second half.

Promising Akram scored their fifth goal off a penalty.

After Mahmoud managed to drive a powerful shot into the Al Sadd net from close range to reduce the deficit, Boundedjah completed his hat-trick with a powerful left-footed drive into the top of the net.

Substitute Sayyar, after getting a cross from Akram, curled one in for The Wolves' seventh goal of the night.

Meanwhile, feared striker Yousef El Arabi also fired a hat-trick as Al Duhail beat Al Shahania 5-1.

El Arabi scored two goals in the first half and another in the second as the defending cham-



Al Sadd's Baghdad Boundedjah (L) is congratulated by Abdelkarim Hassan after he scored against Al Kharaitiyat.



Al Duhail's Yousef El Arabi celebrates his hat-trick against Al Shahania.

pions roared to their 10th win of the season.

El Arabi (24th, 41st and 67th minutes) was well supported by

Paulo Edmilson (46th) and Nam Tae-Hee (90+3) as The Red Knights eased to victory.

The losers' only goal came

from Ramin Semeskandi in the 87th minute when he converted a long-range free-kick that Al Duhail goalkeeper Khalifa

Aboobacker failed to stop.

For his first goal, El Arabi flicked a low shot after a loopy ball that fell near him. The Moroccan fired the shot with his right foot as Al Duhail went 1-0 up.

Four minutes from the half-time whistle, El Arabi picked up a cross and charged into the Al Shahania box. Without wasting time, El Arabi fired one home as Al Shahania protested for off-side. But the calls were dismissed and goal was allowed.

Soon after resumption, Edmilson tapped an easy cross into the net for Al Duhail's third goal. El Arabi completed his hat-trick in the 67th minute when he found the net from close range.

In the 87th minute, Ramin put his name on the scorers' list when his shot went through the hands of the Al Duhail keeper.

Just before the final whistle, Nam scored his seventh goal of the season.

Toppers Al Duhail are on 31 points from 11 matches, while second-placed Al Sadd have 23 from 10. Al Rayyan are third with 21 from 11.

FOOTBALL

GCCF extraordinary general assembly to be held in Oman

Secretary-General of Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation (AGCFF), Jassim al-Rumaihi, announced the holding of an extraordinary General Assembly of AGCFF in the Sultanate of Oman on November 28. He pointed out that the recent contacts with Oman Football Association (OFA) resulted in the agreement on the Sultanate hosting the extraordinary General Assembly.

Al-Rumaihi told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that AGCFF General Secretariat, in co-operation with OFA, invited the members of the Board of Direc-

tors of AGCFF to participate in the Assembly.

He explained that the announcement of Qatar's hosting of the next edition of Gulf Cup 24 tops the first item in the extraordinary General Assembly.

He noted that the meeting will discuss the announcement of the hosting country of the next edition on the championship as well as setting the dates of its launch and the timetable of the organisation which will begin with forming a committee to inspect stadiums and other committees that oversee the administrative and technical aspects of the competition.

SPOTLIGHT

Aspire Zone hosts camp for Canada women boxers



QNA
Doha

Assistant Coach Samir El Mais explained the objectives of the training camp at Aspire and said: "We've travelled here from Canada to help acclimatise to the heat and adjust to different time zones. This marks the final stage of our preparations for the World Championships and we are very impressed by the world-class facilities and expertise that Aspire has to offer athletes. Training and preparation is critical for any boxer ahead of a fight, to sharpen their skills and ensure maximum fitness. And with a comprehensive, week-long training programme mapped out for us here at Aspire, we really do have everything we need."

Aspire Zone Foundation (AZF) welcomed Canada's national women's boxing team in preparation for the Women's World Boxing Championship 2018, scheduled to begin on the 15th of November in New Delhi, India.

The travelling party is comprised of six female fighters and coaches who have travelled to Doha to undertake a comprehensive training programme, with their sights set on excelling at the Championships.

During the training camp – which runs until November 11 – the team will take full advantage of the facilities and expertise on offer at AZF which has become the preferred destination for large numbers of international teams competing in a wide range of sports.

During their stay, the Canadian national boxing team will benefit from an intensive programme that integrates strength training, traction stretches, fight practice and cardio workouts in Aspire Park.

HORSE RACING

Ghazali and Bentley shine with five wins

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Hassan Ali al-Abdulmalik's Almuheet won the Losail Cup for Purebred Arabians, the final race of the 11-race card, to hand trainer Ahmed Kobeissi his first victory of the season, even as Champion Trainer Jassim Mohamed Ghazali and Champion Jockey Harry Bentley notched up five victories at the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club's Al Rayyan Park yesterday.

Saleem Golam helmed Almuheet to a narrow victory over Ghazali's Rassan in the six-furlong finale, while jockey Jimmy Quinn and trainer Ibrahim al-Malki combined to win the 2000m Wathnan Cup for Thoroughbreds with Khataaf, their second winner of the day together.

Khalifa bin Sheail al-Kuwari's Mosayter and Injaaz Stud's Wayside Flower topped the Al Wukair Cup for Local Thoroughbreds and Al Ghariya Cup for Thoroughbred fillies and mares respectively, both the winners saddled by Ghazali.

Melk and Carab were the other winners for Ghazali and Bentley in two Purebred Arabian Handicap events.

Umm Qarn's Aahil picked up a dominant victory for Alban de Mieuille under Ronan Thomas in



Hassan Ali al-Abdulmalik (left) receives the owner's trophy in the presence of QREC general manager Nasser Sherida al-Kaabi (right) after Almuheet won the Losail Cup yesterday. PICTURES: Juhaim



JP Guillambert (foreground) rides Vona to a second place finish ahead of Injaaz Stud's Wayside Flower, ridden by Harry Bentley (hidden), in the Al Ghariya Cup yesterday.

the Local Purebred Arabian Conditions event.

Quinn had earlier ridden Surra Man Raa in the colours of Sheikh Faisal bin Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani to lead a clean sweep of the top three positions for al-Malki in the Local Thoroughbred Plate event for three-year-olds with Nahaab and Look At Me following the winner past the post in that order.

Faleh Bughanaim rode his second winner of the day in the Thoroughbred Claiming Race, guiding King Of Doha to victory for Hadi Nasser al-Ramzani.

Ghazali-trained Strategist and al-Ramzani-schooled On The



Harry Bentley (left) receives the jockey's trophy for riding Wayside Flower to victory in the Al Ghariya Cup yesterday.

Front Line were the two Thoroughbreds who opened the 11-race card with their respective maiden victories.

RESULTS

Race 1: 1. Strategist (Harry Bentley), 2. Holy Shambles (Faleh Bughanaim), 3. Shawwal (Gerald Avranché), 4. Dawryat (Marco Casamento). Won by: 1 3/4, 1 1/4, 3/4. Time: 1:12.99. Owner: Khalifa bin Sheail al-Kuwari. Trainer: Jassim Mohamed Ghazali.
Race 2: 1. On The Front Line (Faleh Bughanaim), 2. Captain Vancouver (Marco Casamento), 3. Flower Festival (Stephan Ladjadi), 4. Suprematism (Tomas Lukasek). Won by: 3/4, 3/4. Time:

1:39.38. Owner: Nasser Owaida Salem al-Hajri. Trainer: Hadi Nasser al-Ramzani.
Race 3: 1. Surra Man Raa (Jimmy Quinn), 2. Nahaab (Stephan Ladjadi), 3. Look At Me (Eduardo Pedroza), 4. Sarat Abha (Faleh Bughanaim). Won by: 4 3/4, 4 1/2, 3 3/4. Time: 1:28.00. Owner: Sheikh Faisal bin Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani. Trainer: Ibrahim al-Malki.
Race 4: 1. King Of Doha (Faleh Bughanaim), 2. Dark Light (Shakir al-Balushi), 3. Moamar (Harry Bentley), 4. Taurita (Marvin Suerland). Won by: 2 1/4, 3 3/4, 1 1/2. Time: 1:56.28. Owner: Abdulaziz Saleh al-Jaber. Trainer: Hadi Nasser al-Ramzani.
Race 5: 1. Melk (Harry Bentley), 2. Lolita Du Panjshir (Meteb Ali al-Marrri), 3. Arbed

(Tomas Lukasek), 4. Rodin (Stephan Ladjadi). Won by: Hd, 2 1/4, 2 1/2. Time: 1:36.99. Owner: Injaaz Stud. Trainer: Jassim Mohamed Ghazali.
Race 6: 1. Carab (Harry Bentley), 2. Tayf (Ronan Thomas), 3. Djelamer (Tomas Lukasek), 4. Al Majh'Hour (Faleh Bughanaim). Won by: 1/4, 1 1/2, 2 3/4. Time: 2:17.50. Owner: Khalifa bin Sheail al-Kuwari. Trainer: Jassim Mohamed Ghazali.
Race 7: 1. Aahil (Ronan Thomas), 2. Majnona (JP Guillambert), 3. Istibdad (Harry Bentley), 4. Kasser (Stephan Ladjadi). Won by: 5 3/4, No, 3 1/4. Time: 1:32.45. Owner: Umm Qarn. Trainer: Alban de Mieuille.
Race 8: 1. Mosayter (Harry Bentley), 2. Footprintinthesand (Saleem Golam), 3. Al Lusail (Faleh Bughanaim), 4. Sraab (Ray Fuentes). Won by: 1/2, 2 3/4, 3/4. Time: 1:40.98. Owner: Khalifa bin Sheail al-Kuwari. Trainer: Jassim Mohamed Ghazali.
Race 9: 1. Wayside Flower (Harry Bentley), 2. Vona (JP Guillambert), 3. Ighhawa (Jimmy Quinn), 4. Bronze Maquette (Eduardo Pedroza). Won by: No, 2 1/4, 1/2. Time: 1:25.61. Owner: Injaaz Stud. Trainer: Jassim Mohamed Ghazali.
Race 10: 1. Khataaf (Jimmy Quinn), 2. Tamih (Jean Baptiste Hamel), 3. Domfront (Harry Bentley), 4. Queliindo (Saleem Golam). Won by: Nk, 2 1/2, Nk. Time: 2:05.11. Owner: Ibrahim al-Malki. Trainer: Ibrahim al-Malki.
Race 11: 1. Almuheet (Saleem Golam), 2. Rassan (Harry Bentley), 3. Lucky Sand (Jean Baptiste Hamel), 4. Raqee (Gerald Avranché). Won by: 3/4, 6, 6 3/4. Time: 1:19.46. Owner: Hassan Ali al-Abdulmalik. Trainer: Ahmed Kobeissi.