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**NBA | Page 5**

**Pistons beat Warriors to win fifth straight, Raptors roll on**

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# GULF TIMES SPORT



**FOOTBALL**

## Germany and Netherlands to clash in Euro qualifiers

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**QNB STARS LEAGUE**

# Boundedjah and Afif make Gharafa look like novices

Both players hit hat-tricks as Al Sadd win 8-1 to close the gap on Al Duhail who drew 2-2 with Al Rayyan



Akram Afif (L) and Baghdad Boundedjah celebrate during Al Sadd's 8-1 demolition of Al Gharafa yesterday. PICTURES: Noushad Thekkayil



Duhail's Yousef El Arabi (second from right) is congratulated by his teammates after scoring against Rayyan.

**By Sports Reporter**  
 Doha

Baghdad Boundedjah and Akram Afif hit hat-tricks as Al Sadd hammered Al Gharafa 8-1 to post their 10th victory in the QNB Stars League yesterday. Hassan al-Haydous (63rd minute) and substitute Hassan Ahmed (86th) also joined the party as Portuguese coach Jesualdo Ferreira walked off the Al Gharafa Stadium pitch with a huge smile. For Al Gharafa, who missed the services of Dutch star Wesley Sneijder, Mehdi Taremi reduced the deficit in the 52nd minute. Al Sadd's emphatic victory

gave them 32 points from 13 matches, but more importantly helped them close the gap on Al Duhail (35), who drew 2-2 with Al Rayyan in yesterday's second high-profile encounter. Al Duhail remain the only unbeaten team in the tournament but yesterday's draw means they lead Al Sadd by only three points, giving the Wolves much encouragement as the tournament progresses. For Al Sadd, Boundedjah scored in the 19th, 28th and 45+3 minutes (penalty). Akram was on target in the 25th, 40th and 57th minutes (penalty). Al Sadd grabbed the opening goal thanks to a good finish by Boundedjah. The Algerian striker exhibited incredible pace to hoodwink his marker Ilyas

Ahmad after receiving a loopy cross from the midfield. Once he moved into the Al Gharafa box, Boundedjah found one of the narrowest angles to shoot the ball past keeper Ali for his 24th strike this season. Akram doubled Al Sadd's lead from close range, flicking the ball into the net with a right-footed shot. Three minutes later, Al Haydous slipped in a neat cross from the flank and Boundedjah deflected the ball into the lead as Al Sadd went 3-0 up. Akram showed amazing speed with the ball and despite being hotly chased by an Al Gharafa player he calmly slotted the ball past keeper Yousef Hassan for Al Sadd's fourth goal. In injury time, Al Gharafa's

Youssef Muftah was shown a yellow card for a rough tackle on Akram in the Al Gharafa box. Seconds later, Boundedjah converted the resultant penalty from the needless tackle on Akram. Taremi converted a penalty to reduce the deficit in the 52nd minute. Akram completed his hat-trick when he scored Al Sadd's sixth goal off a penalty kick. Al Haydous then made it 7-1 for Al Sadd after deflecting a neat cross from Boundedjah into the net. Substitute Ahmed too found the net as Al Sadd closed the match. Meanwhile, Al Duhail and Al Rayyan played out a 2-2 draw in a high-voltage clash. Interestingly, both teams were locked in a goalless draw in the

first leg. Star Moroccan striker Yousef El Arabi scored both goals for Al Duhail in the 20th and 52nd minutes, while Brazilian forward Luca Borges netted The Lions' consolation goal in the 41st minute. Al Duhail were done in by an own goal scored by their defender Mohamed Mousa in the 83rd minute. Al Duhail, without injured South Korean midfielder Nam Tae-Hee, called the shots from the word go. They took the half-time break with 62 per cent of ball possession even though the teams were tied 1-1. El Arabi opened the scoring by placing home a cross from the right by Brazilian winger Paolo Edmilson. Al Rayyan equalised when

### MSAKNI BACK IN TRAINING

Youssef Msakni has resumed training with Al Duhail's following a long absence due to a cruciate ligament injury. The Tunisian international suffered the injury during Al

Duhail's match against Al Sailiya late last season. Msakni led Al Duhail to the QNB Stars League title last season and won the Player of the Year award. (QNA)

Luca slotted home after receiving a through pass from Rodrigo Tabata, to the dismay of Al Duhail defenders who were caught off-guard for a moment. The scoreline would have swelled had it not been for the alertness of Al Rayyan goalkeeper Fahad Younes, who thwarted attempts by El Arabi and Edmilson in the first half. Edmilson came close for one

more time, but cracked his shot against the horizontal. Al Rayyan started the second session by fielding Sebastian Sorria, who recovered from an injury, in place of Mowafaq Awad. However, it was Al Duhail who scored again. The script for the goal was the same. Edmilson sent in a measured cross from the right and El Arabi was bang on target.

**EPL**

# Arsenal rally past Spurs, Chelsea bounce back

**DPA**  
 London

A furious second-half comeback gave Arsenal a 4-2 win over Tottenham Hotspur in an exciting north London derby yesterday. Goals from Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, Alexandre Lacazette and Lucas Torreira after the break were the difference in a game in which both sides held the lead. Arsenal are now unbeaten in 19 games in all competitions and move above Tottenham into fourth in the Premier League on goal difference. "At half-time we were confident," Aubameyang, who scored twice, told Sky Sports. "We knew we could do it in the second half, come back, and we did it." Chelsea also jumped over Tottenham into third by earlier beating west London neighbours Fulham 2-0. Pedro Rodriguez and Ruben Loftus-Cheek scored

as Chelsea rebounded from their first league loss last week to Tottenham. A third local derby wraps up the day's action as Liverpool can pull within two points of leaders Manchester City by beating Everton. Arsenal came out flying at the Emirates Stadium and went in front in the 10th minute thanks to Aubameyang's penalty after Jan Vertonghen's handball. Tottenham then stunned the Gunners twice in a four-minute span to take the lead before half-time. Eric Dier equalised by heading Christian Eriksen's free-kick between keeper Bernd Leno and the post. Tempers flared after as Dier ran over to celebrate in front of the home fans, provoking a skirmish with Arsenal players warming up in the area. Spurs struck again moments later with Harry Kane's penalty after Rob Holding needlessly took down Son Heung Min. Lacazette and Aaron Ramsey came on to start the second half



Arsenal's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang celebrates scoring against Tottenham in the English Premier League yesterday.

and the latter set up Aubameyang to equalise with a curling shot in the 56th minute.

The two substitutes then combined to put the Gunners in front as Ramsey took the ball from Juan

Foyth and played in Lacazette, whose shot from outside the area deflected in off Dier. Torreira

### Origins snatches dramatic derby win for Liverpool

**Liverpool:** Forgotten man Divock Origi snatched a dramatic last-gasp 1-0 win for Liverpool over Merseyside rivals Everton in the Premier League at Anfield yesterday. Everton looked to have done enough to secure a point but a horrendous error from goalkeeper Jordan Pickford gifted the ball to Origi, who headed it home in the sixth minute of stoppage time. Chasing a first win at Anfield since 1999, Everton created the

better of the openings in the first half, but found Liverpool goalkeeper Allison in inspired form. Liverpool upped the tempo after the break and twice went close through Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane. Origi, who came off the bench for his first league appearance of the season, saw an earlier close-range effort come out off the post, before he grabbed the headlines with the bizarre winner.

then delivered the knockout blow by firing a shot past Hugo Lloris into the far corner. Vertonghen's day then got worse as he was sent off for a second yellow card after a lunging challenge on Lacazette with five minutes left. Chelsea bounced back from last week's disappointment with another win over

Fulham. The Blues, outplayed in their 3-1 loss at Tottenham, have lost just one of the 27 Premier League meetings with Fulham and are unbeaten in the last 17. Pedro opened the scoring after just four minutes with Loftus-Cheek coming off the bench to get the clincher eight minutes from time.

LA LIGA

# Barcelona go top after beating Villarreal

Atletico Madrid stumble again on the road in feisty draw with Girona



Barcelona's Carles Alena (second left) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Villarreal in the La Liga at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona yesterday. (AFP)

Agencies  
Barcelona

Gerard Pique and Carles Alena struck to send Barcelona provisionally top of La Liga with a 2-0 win over Villarreal, before previous leaders Sevilla face Alaves later last night. The champions were not at their best in a tight match but had enough quality to squeeze past the visitors, who are 17th.

Gerard Moreno hit the post for Villarreal early on before Ousmane Dembele's fine cross was headed in by Pique to open the scoring in the 33rd minute. Philippe Coutinho fired wide as Barcelona looked to increase their

lead but it was one of few chances created before substitute Alena finished off a brilliant through ball from Lionel Messi to seal the win.

Earlier, Atletico Madrid's troubles away from home continued as they were held to a 1-1 draw by Girona despite Diego Costa's late show helping to salvage them a point. Costa's excellent run and first touch panicked Girona's Jonas Ramalho into poking into his own net in the 82nd minute after the in-form Christian Stuani had put the hosts ahead at Montilivi.

The late equaliser was enough to put a smile on Diego Simeone's face, and the Argentine was struck by the quality of the league after the draw, which means his side have won only once in

seven away matches in La Liga this season. "La Liga is barbaric," Simeone said afterwards. "There are no easy opponents."

It means another slip at the top of the table in a most unpredictable title race, with Atletico only two points ahead of Real Madrid and three behind Barcelona. Girona sit seventh after an excellent start to their campaign, and Stuani has led the way. His goal was his 12th of the campaign and enough to move him top of the scoring charts, ahead of Iago Aspas and Messi.

Saul Niguez was pulled out of central midfield and drafted into left-back as cover for Atletico's defensive absentees, who included Filipe Luis, Juanfran, Diego Godin and Jose Gimenez.

Costa returned after shaking off a foot problem. His partner, Antoine Griezman, forced an early save with a dipping shot from distance while Saul hit the crossbar after a bursting run out of defence. Atletico made the early running, but Girona grew stronger and struck in added-time at the end of the first half. Stuani raced free and while Jan Oblak thought he could clear, he only succeeded in clearing out his opponent. Referee Ricardo De Burgos at first awarded a free-kick but VAR said the foul had been inside the box.

Stuani made no mistake from the spot. Atleti prodded and probed in the second half but it took until the 76th minute for them to go close.

Saul poked Angel Correa's header

towards goal but Yassine Bounou reacted quickly to push wide. Girona looked to be edging toward victory but then Costa stepped in. Nipping in behind the defence, he cushioned the ball with his left foot and was poised to shoot with his right, only for the scrambling Ramalho to lunge and push the ball past his own goalkeeper.

Brilliant one minute, belligerent the next, Costa was fortunate only to receive a yellow card after barging into and then swinging his arm against Bernardo Espinosa's back.

Gelson Martins and Cristian Portu could have won it for either side in the dying moments but as Simeone's smile suggested after the final whistle, a draw was a fair reflection of the play.

LIGUE 1

## Henry laments Monaco's 'fear of winning' after latest loss



AFP  
Paris

A week that started brightly for Thierry Henry and Monaco ended in disappointment as they let in two late goals to lose 2-1 at home to rising Montpellier in Ligue 1 on Saturday. Youri Tielemans gave Monaco the lead in the 42nd minute, but Andy Delort levelled after 81 minutes and Petar Skutelic hit the winner with four minutes left.

Monaco remain mired in 19th place in the 20-team division. Last weekend Henry eked out his first victory as Monaco manager at Caen, but on Wednesday his side lost away to Atletico Madrid, a defeat that ensured they will finish last in their Champions League group.

Against Montpellier, Monaco had a chance to double their lead in the 54th minute when Tielemans, faced with an open goal, passed to Aleksandr Golovin, who hit the bar. After that the visitors took control. "You've got to shoot into the empty net," said Henry after the match. Asked if the match was a disaster, Henry answered: "Yes!"

"We talk about the fear of losing, but the fear of winning also exists," he said. "We gave a good performance for 54 minutes...but that's not enough." The victory lifts Montpellier to second.

They are 13 points behind Paris Saint-Germain, who round off the weekend's matches in Bordeaux late last night, but are just one point ahead of Lyon and two clear of Lille. Those two met on Saturday and drew 2-2.

In Lille, the home team raced into a two goal lead with goals by Loic Remy, after 17 minutes, and Nicolas Pepe, after 28 minutes. Lyon, who drew by the same score against Manchester City on Tuesday to remain on course for the last 16 of the Champions League, by Bertrand Traore after 63 minutes and Moussa Dembele with four minutes to play.

"There is automatically a feeling of frustration among the players," said Christophe Galtier, the Lille coach. "In the end, I'm happy with this point."

SERIE A

## AC Milan jump to fourth after battling back to beat Parma

AFP  
Milan

Injury-hit AC Milan got back to winning ways in Serie A yesterday as second half goals from Patrick Cutrone and Franck Kessie saw them come from behind to beat promoted Parma 2-1. Gennaro Gattuso's side fell 2-0 to Juventus and were held 1-1 by Lazio in their previous two league games and the win at the San Siro takes them fourth, two points ahead of Lazio who were playing bottom club Chievo late last night.

It was a hard-fought victory for Milan, days after competing in the Europa League and with a number of players missing. Alessio Romagnoli, Mattia Caldara, Lucas Biglia and Giacomo Bonaventura are all injured, with Argentine forward Gonzalo Higuain suspended.

"This is a precious win because we played against a team who can trouble you in every moment," said Gattuso. "This team is incredible, the boys always show grit, determination and sense of belonging. They are giving their all, it's easy to coach a group like that."

Roberto Inglese nodded in his fourth goal this season for Parma from a corner five minutes after the break but Milan pulled one back six minutes later thanks to Cutrone volleying home. Kessie slotted in Milan's second from the spot on 71 minutes after Alessandro Bastoni was deemed

after consultation with VAR to have handled the ball. Parma drop to eighth and are now five points behind AC Milan who occupy the final Champions League berth. Torino — with coach Walter Mazzarri back on the bench after a health scare — also rallied past 10-man Genoa 2-1 to move sixth and the Europa League places. Genoa had to play with a man less for over an hour after Romulo was sent off for two bookings in three minutes, but Christian Kouame nevertheless put the visitors ahead after 36 minutes when he beat the offside trap to fire in from close range.

However Torino hit back with two quick-fire goals in first half stoppage time, Cristian Ansaldi levelling the scores before Andrea Belotti fired home the winner from the penalty spot after a Sandro foul on Iago Falque.

Elsewhere, Sassuolo dropped out of the European places following a goalless draw at Udinese while Cagliari earned a point with a 1-1 draw at second-from-bottom Frosinone. Champions Juventus pulled 11 points clear on Saturday with a 3-0 win at Fiorentina, with Cristiano Ronaldo scoring from the spot to bag his 10th goal in 14 games and move joint top of the Serie A scorers with Genoa's Krzysztof Piatek.

Later last night, Inter Milan, a point behind Napoli in third, were looking to pile the pressure on Champions League-chasing Roma, who have dropped to seventh after a run of poor form. Second-placed Napoli travel to Atalanta today.



Parma's Matteo Scoccarella (left) vies for the ball with AC Milan's Patrick Cutrone during the Italian Serie A match at the San Siro stadium in Milan yesterday. (AFP)

PREMIER LEAGUE

## Arsenal stayed mentally strong to beat Tottenham, says Aubameyang



Arsenal's Alexandre Lacazette (right) celebrates with teammates Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang (left), Matteo Guendouzi (2L) and Sead Kolasinc after scoring against Tottenham Hotspur at the Emirates Stadium in London yesterday. (AFP)

AFP  
London

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang said Arsenal were confident they could fight back against Tottenham despite seeing their early lead wiped out at the Emirates yesterday. Unai Emery's side extended their unbeaten run to 19 matches in all competitions after battling back from 2-1 down at half-time in the Premier League thriller to win 4-2.

Aubameyang's penalty had put Arsenal ahead before Eric Dier's header and a Harry Kane spot-kick gave Tottenham the lead at the break. Arsenal hit back in thrilling style. Aubameyang levelled the scores at 2-2 with a superb long-range equaliser before Alexandre Lacazette came off the bench to put Arsenal ahead and Lucas Torreira sealed the points with his first goal for the club.

"After the first goal we conceded we had a moment where we were a bit down, but at half-time we were confident," Aubameyang said. "We spoke, we knew that we can do it in the second half. With the fans, the atmosphere, we felt strong and could go for the win. I think we can see always in the second half we played very well, we don't give up. That's the mentality."

The win lifts Arsenal above Tottenham into fourth in the table, but Aubameyang said that was not the main concern. "The most important thing is the present right now," he said. "We are looking of course to continue this series. We are still winning games and we're on an unbeaten run so we have to keep going."

**POCHETTINO WARNED SPURS STARS TO KEEP COOL DURING DERBY BRAWL** Mauricio Pochettino insisted he was trying to keep the peace af-

ter the Tottenham manager raced to join a brawl involving players from both teams during his side's explosive defeat against Arsenal. A fiery north London derby boiled over in the first half at the Emirates Stadium after Tottenham's Dier celebrated his equaliser with an inflammatory gesture. Aubameyang had already angered Tottenham fans by celebrating in front of them after his 10th minute penalty.

It was reported on social media that bananas were thrown onto the pitch towards Aubameyang from the Tottenham section during his prolonged celebration in an incident that could lead to a Football Association investigation. Dier added to the volatile atmosphere by holding his finger up to his mouth to gesture to Arsenal fans to be quiet after his goal.

Arsenal substitutes Stephan Lichtsteiner and Aaron Ramsey took exception to Dier's antics,

prompting a bout of pushing and shoving involving numerous players at the side of the pitch. Pochettino sprinted down the touchline as the feud continued, but the Argentine was at pains to point out he was only trying to keep his players from losing their focus.

"In that moment I was trying to put calm in our players. There was a fight but I didn't know what was going on," Pochettino said. "Sometimes there are these situations. I don't know if it was the celebration of Dier that upset some people. The team had scored and the energy was on our side, so I wanted us to be clever."

Arsenal manager Unai Emery, a good friend of Pochettino, agreed with his counterpart that it would have been better if both teams had kept their composure. "In that moment, the players have very big emotions," Emery said. "They were fighting a lot, but we need also to be calm."

SPOTLIGHT

# Germany, Netherlands to meet in Euro qualifiers

The qualifiers begin in March, with the final round of games in November 2019.

AFP  
Dublin

Former champions Germany and the Netherlands will meet again in qualifying for Euro 2020 after being paired together in yesterday's draw in Dublin, but World Cup semi-finalists England have little to complain about.

The Germans were the most dangerous team in the second pot of seeds having been relegated from the top tier of the Nations League, in part due to a 3-0 defeat to the Dutch in October. Northern Ireland, Estonia and Belarus are the sides tasked with causing a huge upset in Group C.

However, with the top two teams in each of the 10 groups qualifying automatically for the 24-team tournament, which will be held for the first time across 12 different host countries, there is little prospect of any leading nation missing out. The remaining four places will be allocated via the Nations League play-offs. "The group is typically tough," said Germany head coach Joachim Loew, who is under pressure to bounce back after also crashing out at the group stage of the World Cup. "The Netherlands and Germany are the favourites, but it should be enough for both (to go through)."

A young Netherlands side are improving under Ronald Koeman after failing to qualify for both Euro 2016 and this year's World Cup. And with Amsterdam one of the host cities, Koeman insisted qualifying rather than claiming another victory over Germany is his priority. "If you look back how it was one year ago and how the public were with the national team, it is totally different at this stage," said Koeman, who has led the Netherlands to the final four of the Nations League.

The semi-finals and final will be played at Wembley, handing England a major incentive to win the European Championship for the first time after their run to the last four at this year's



Netherlands coach Ronald Koeman (left) and England manager Gareth Southgate greet each other after the UEFA Euro 2020 qualifying draw in Dublin, Ireland, yesterday. (Reuters)

World Cup. There is little for Gareth Southgate's side to fear in Group A alongside the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Montenegro and Kosovo.

But Southgate called on his team to get used to dealing with high expectations. "Once you are seeded then inevitably the draw is one you should be in charge of," said Southgate.

"It's up to us. We're favourites and that's something we've got to get used

to anyway. We have high expectations over the next few years and adapting to that is probably key to our development as a team now."

World Cup winners France will meet Iceland and Albania, who they beat on their way to the Euro 2016 final, as well as Turkey, Moldova and Andorra in Group H. "It could have been better, it could have been worse," said France coach Didier Deschamps. "For

every country playing France, the world champions, it is obviously an honour for them."

Belgium and Russia lead the way in a tough-looking group for Scotland alongside Cyprus, Kazakhstan and San Marino in Group I. Portugal will be confident of having the chance to defend their title despite some tricky trips to Ukraine, Serbia, Lithuania and Luxembourg. Spain will look to bounce

back from a disappointing end to their Nations League campaign in what should be a comfortable section for the three-time European champions with Sweden, Norway, Romania, the Faroe Islands and Malta. "On paper you can think we are favourites but we need to show that where it's difficult, on the pitch," said Spain coach Luis Enrique.

The draw hosts Republic of Ireland benefited from a rule that only two of the 12 hosts for the final tournament could be drawn in the same qualifying group as they avoided the Netherlands and Germany.

Neighbours Northern Ireland took their place.

Instead, new Republic manager Mick McCarthy will meet Switzerland and Denmark in Group D as well as Georgia and Gibraltar. Gareth Bale will clash with Real Madrid team-mate Luka Modric as Wales take on World Cup runners-up Croatia in Group E alongside Slovakia, Hungary and Azerbaijan. The qualifiers begin in March, with the final round of games in November 2019.

THE GROUP LINE-UP FOR EURO 2020 QUALIFYING

Group A: England, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Kosovo

Group B: Portugal, Ukraine, Serbia, Lithuania, Luxembourg

Group C: Netherlands, Germany, Northern Ireland, Estonia, Belarus

Group D: Switzerland, Denmark, Republic of Ireland, Georgia, Gibraltar

Group E: Croatia, Wales, Slovakia, Hungary, Azerbaijan

Group F: Spain, Sweden, Norway, Romania, Faroe Islands, Malta

Group G: Poland, Austria, Israel, Slovenia, Macedonia, Latvia

Group H: France, Iceland, Turkey, Albania, Moldova, Andorra

Group I: Belgium, Russia, Scotland, Cyprus, Kazakhstan, San Marino

Group J: Italy, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Greece, Armenia, Liechtenstein

Robben to exit Bayern Munich at end of season: Report

Munich: Arjen Robben reportedly confirmed yesterday he will leave Bayern Munich at the end of the season after a decade with the defending Bundesliga champions. "This is my last year at Bayern. It has been 10 wonderful years," Robben, who turns 35 in January, told a Bayern fan club meeting in Tegernsee, near Munich, according to Dutch newspaper *Algemeen Dagblad*.

"I think this is the right thing to do and to make it known now. There has been discussions about 'the oldies' at Bayern and all that stuff. I made the decision a few weeks ago and the fans now know where I stand. It's a big step. It's extraordinary that I can still play at this top level at my age."

The fleet-footed veteran has, however, left his options open for next season, saying he is "waiting for offers". Robben has 143 goals and 101 assists in 305 games for Bayern since joining from Real Madrid in 2009.

He hit the winning goal in the 2013 Champions League final for the Bavarian giants and won the Bundesliga title seven times. Both Robben and Franck Ribery, 35, are in the final years of their contracts at Bayern and president Uli Hoeneß also confirmed yesterday that this is will probably be the pair's final year. "Ribery and Robben are very likely to be in their last year at Bayern," Hoeneß stated, telling Bayern fans to expect transfer next season. "There will be changes in some positions, we will be very aggressive with our transfer policy, our coffers are well filled."

Despite his advancing years, Robben proved he is still deadly with the ball at his feet. He scored the first two stunning goals in last Tuesday's 5-1 thrashing of Benfica which confirmed Bayern's place in the last 16 of the Champions League. Robben sat out Saturday's 2-1 win at Werder Bremen.

BUNDESLIGA

## Werner lifts Leipzig to third, Dortmund seven points clear



RB Leipzig's Timo Werner (left) shoots at goal as Borussia Mönchengladbach's Tony Jantschke attempts to block during the Bundesliga match in Leipzig, Germany, yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP  
Leipzig, Germany

Timo Werner netted twice as RB Leipzig climbed to third in the Bundesliga yesterday with a 2-0 win over Borussia Mönchengladbach which left leaders Borussia Dortmund seven points clear. After three straight wins, second-placed Gladbach crashed at the Red Bull Arena as Leipzig dominated with Germany striker Werner netting both goals in the first-half to leave him with eight league goals so far this season.

"It was a lot of fun," Werner said as Leipzig bounced back from last weekend's shock defeat to Wolfsburg and loss at sister club Red Bull Salzburg on Thursday in the Europa League. "When we play like we did today, everything is possible – not just for me, but for the whole team," he added with Leipzig facing strugglers Freiburg and Mainz before a mouth-watering clash at Bayern Munich on December 19.

Leipzig's win pushes defending Bundesliga champions Bayern, who won 2-1 at Werder Bremen on Saturday, down from third to fourth. The Bavarian giants, who trail Dortmund by nine points, will drop to fifth if Eintracht Frankfurt beat Wolfsburg at home late last night.

Leipzig's victory left Dortmund with a com-

manding lead in the table after their 2-0 win over Freiburg on Saturday as Paco Alcacer became the league's top-scorer with his 10th goal after Marco Reus had converted a penalty.

Yesterday, Werner fired hosts Leipzig ahead after just three minutes when a long ball to Yusuf Poulsen put the Danish forward deep into Gladbach territory and he put Werner away. The 22-year-old traded passes with midfielder Marcel Sabitzer before firing home across Gladbach goalkeeper Yann Sommer for the superb opener.

Gladbach's forwards Thorgan Hazard and Lars Stindl ensured Leipzig goalkeeper Peter Gulacsi had a busy afternoon to keep the visitors in the game. However, Leipzig made sure of the win when Werner finished a superb counter-attack.

He laid off the ball for Poulsen and then sprinted away with the Gladbach defence in all sorts of trouble.

Poulsen beat a defender and Sommer superbly in the Gladbach goal, but the ball ran loose in the box and Werner pounced to tuck it home just before the half-time whistle.

Hazard hit the post with Gulacsi beaten with 15 minutes left in the best second-half chance for either side, but Leipzig held on. "Of course we are disappointed," said Gladbach coach Dieter Hecking, who praised the Leipzig performance, adding "we must accept the defeat when our opponents played so well!"

FOCUS

## Celtic win Scottish League Cup final as Rodgers stays on trophy trail

AFP  
Glasgow

Ryan Christie was the hero as Celtic made it a magnificent seven successive trophy wins with a 1-0 victory over Aberdeen in the Scottish League Cup final at Hampden Park yesterday.

The midfielder, who had two spells on loan at the Pittodrie club prior to this season, scored what proved to be the winner with a shot in added time at the end of the first half. Dons keeper Joe Lewis brilliantly saved Scott Sinclair's controversial penalty in the 52nd minute of a pulsating second-half. Since taking charge of the Parkead club in 2016, boss Brendan Rodgers has won every piece of silverware on offer and this most recent victory – the 18th in the competition for Celtic – is the first step towards a domestic treble.

Aberdeen boss Derek McInnes has now lost three cup finals to Celtic during the Hoops' current period of domination, which shows no sign of abating. There were six added minutes at the end of the first half and just before they came to an end Celtic went ahead. Christie raced on to



Celtic players celebrate with the trophy after winning the Scottish League Cup in Glasgow. (Reuters)

a long pass from Dedryck Boyata, forced his way past Dons captain Graeme Shinnie and slammed the ball high into the net after his first shot had been parried by Lewis. There was drama shortly after the break when Dons midfielder Dominic Ball was judged by referee to have handled a Christie pass inside the box. It looked not only accidental but outside the penalty area – but Lewis threw himself to his right to push Sinclair's penalty behind for a corner.

RANGERS BEAT HEARTS FOR TOP SPOT

Ten-man Rangers beat Hearts 2-1 yesterday to climb to the

top of the Scottish Premiership, with Alfredo Morelos grabbing a contentious winner for Steven Gerrard's team. With leaders Celtic busy on League Cup final duty, the Ibrox men travelled to Tynecastle looking to grab the title race initiative against a side without a win in five games.

Gareth McAuley put through his own net in the 27th minute but the Northern Ireland defender was bailed out when his centre-back partner Connor Goldson bundled home the equaliser and Morelos clinched the win shortly before half-time.

Rangers found themselves reduced to 10 men when Scott Ar-

field was dismissed in the second half but they held on for the win. Hearts took a deserved lead when McAuley diverted the ball into his own net after a cross from Marcus Godinho.

But the visitors were level just eight minutes later as Morelos nudged a James Tavernier corner to the back post where Goldson forced the ball past goalkeeper Zdenek Zlamal and over the line at the second attempt. Rangers scored again shortly before the interval following a Tavernier free-kick. Hearts were thrown a lifeline with 18 minutes left as Arfield got his marching orders for a challenge on Zlamal.

BOTTOMLINE

## Vietnam take control of Suzuki Cup semi-final

AFP  
Bacolod, Philippines

Vietnam put themselves in a strong position to reach their first AFF Suzuki Cup final in a decade with a 2-1 away win in the first leg of their semi-final against the Philippines yesterday. Nguyen Anh Duc headed the visitors into the lead after 12 minutes at Panaad Stadium, but Patrick Reichelt restored parity

with a close-range volley on the stroke of half-time.

However, Phan Van Duc put the 2008 champions back in front early in the second half, as they grabbed the upper hand ahead of the return game at Hanoi's My Dinh Stadium on Thursday.

The winners over the two legs will meet Malaysia or Thailand, who drew 0-0 on Saturday, in the final of Southeast Asia's biennial tournament later this month.

Vietnam grabbed the early initiative in Bacolod when Doan Van

Hau's lofted ball caught out the Azkals defence, with Anh Duc looping a header over goalkeeper Michael Falkegaard and into the net. Van Duc and Nguyen Quang Hai both came close to extending the lead for the visitors but the Filipinos got back on level terms in first-half stoppage time.

Following an exchange of passes on the left flank, Phil Young-husband sent an accurate cross for Reichelt to volley home from close range. The hosts deserved their equaliser, but they were

caught cold again at the start of the second half as Nguyen Trong Hoang chipped the ball over the top of the defence for Van Duc to beat the offside trap.

It could have got worse for the Filipinos as Adam Reed's deflection forced a fine reflex save from Falkegaard. The Philippines goalkeeper then made good stops to keep out a pair of efforts by substitute Ha Duc Chinh, while Nguyen Cong Phuong shot wide after a great run through the home defence.

GOLF

# Finau joins Stenson, Rahm in lead at Hero World Challenge

Tournament host Woods shoots 72 that saw him drop to last in the 18-player field

AFP  
Nassau, Bahamas

Henrik Stenson, Jon Rahm and Tony Finau are tied for the lead on 13-under par heading into the final round of the Hero World Challenge. Sweden's Stenson and Spain's Rahm, who shared the overnight lead, couldn't be separated at the close of day three in signing for three-under par 69s while American Finau birdied both the 15th and 16th holes in a round of 67 to join his European Ryder Cup-winning rivals.

"I played nicely birding four of the par-fives, and on this golf course, we have five of them," said Finau who is making his debut in the \$3m event hosted by Tiger Woods on the Albany Club course.

"That's what you have to do to play well, so I was able to do that today. This is a golf course I'm not very familiar with, I played it once before we played. When I'm playing well, I feel like I can score on any golf course, especially a course that has five par-fives."

"We play a lot of golf courses on the PGA Tour there's only two or three, so to be able to have those couple extra par-fives you just know you're going to have some opportunities to score and I've been able to take advantage of those opportunities," added Finau, who is nine-under on 15 par-fives through three rounds.

The 29-year old Salt Lake City golfer said he had also benefited from a small adjustment to his putter as he seeks to make amends after losing out in a play-off in last month's WGC - HSBC Champions. "I added two degrees of loft in my putter after Thursday and then went out and shot 64 yesterday with it and so I decided to keep it," he said.

Stenson was four-under par over the outward nine holes but played the inward half in one-over as he seeks a first victory since capturing the 2017 Wyndham Championship. "It's a three-way tie for the lead so it's very much an open ballgame," Stenson said. "It's a small-



Tony Finau of the United States plays a shot during the third round of the Hero World Challenge in Nassau, Bahamas on Saturday. (AFP)

field tournament, but it still gives you a nice boost if you manage to win at the end of the day."

Fellow Swede Alex Noren was celebrating after recording a hole-in-one at the par-three 17th hole in what was

a remarkable finish for the Ryder Cup star. Noren was two-over par after 10 holes and then after a birdie on 12 he

completed his closing five holes in bizarre manner - birdie (14), eagle (15), triple-bogey (16), ace (17) and birdie

(18) in a score of 70 that put him tied for eighth on eight-under.

Woods, meanwhile, couldn't find any momentum, his third-round 72 seeing him drop to last in the 18-player field on two-under par. "I just haven't played clean this week," said Woods, who had five birdies on his card but also three bogeys and a double bogey seven at the par-five third.

The 14-time major winner began the week battling a "bug" he picked up from his son Charlie. "Today was probably the best I've felt physically this week, finally started to get my energy back and started to feel a little bit better," he said.

Immediately following the event, Woods is flying by private jet to Los Angeles to board a flight direct to Melbourne. He'll be there for three days as part of his preparations as the USA Presidents Cup Team Captain ahead of the staging of the biennial event last next year.

"We'll go out there and look at the golf course and we'll look at the set-up and drive around it and see the administrative side of it and where we'll have the team facility," he said.

THIRD ROUND SCORES

- (USA unless stated, par-72):  
 203 - Tony Finau 72-64-67, Jon Rahm (ESP) 71-63-69, Henrik Stenson (SWE) 68-66-69  
 205 - Gary Woodland 72-66-67  
 206 - Rickie Fowler 72-67-67  
 207 - Xander Schauffele 73-68-66, Dustin Johnson 68-67-72  
 208 - Patrick Reed 65-77-66, Justin Rose (ENG) 70-70-69, Alex Noren (SWE) 69-69-70  
 210 - Justin Thomas 70-70-70  
 211 - Bubba Watson 69-73-69, Patrick Cantlay 65-70-76  
 212 - Bryson DeChambeau 70-71-71, Keegan Bradley 71-69-72  
 213 - Jason Day (AUS) 71-72-70, Hideki Matsuyama (JAP) 74-68-71  
 214 - Tiger Woods 73-69-72

SPOTLIGHT

## Qatar U-19 cricket team leave for Asia Division 2 Qualifiers



QCA President Yousef Jeham al-Kuwari with officials and national under-19 team players at the Asia Town Cricket Stadium in Doha.

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

Qatar's cricket team left Doha yesterday for Thailand to take part in the ICC Under-19 World Cup Asia Division 2 Qualifiers. Hussain Khan will lead the 14-member squad, while Shubh Agarwal will be his deputy. Qatar's opening match is against Thailand on December 10. Cricket Thailand is hosting the event at Bangkok and Ching Mai from December 9 to 17 with ten teams divided into two groups. Two top teams from each pool will advance to the semi-finals.

The finalists will join Nepal, Malaysia, and Singapore in the Asia Division 1 Qualifiers to fight out for a single spot in the Under-19 World Cup from the continent.

Group 1 consists of Hong Kong, the Maldives, Bahrain, China and Kuwait, while Group 2 comprises Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bhutan, Oman and hosts Thailand. The semi-finals are scheduled on December 16, while the third place play-off and the final will be held on December 17.

The five winners of each regional Division 1 - will join the eleven automatic qualifiers from the ICC U19 Cricket World Cup 2018, Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, England, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, South

Africa, Sri Lanka and the Windies - for the tournament that will take place in January and February 2020.

Due to the depth in strength in the Asia, Africa and Europe regions, a two division qualification pathway is being held. Teams from the Americas and EAP region will have a one division qualifying process that gets underway in 2019, with the winner of each regional Division 1 claiming five ICC U19 Cricket World Cup places.

Qatar Cricket Association President Yousef Jeham al-Kuwari met with the team and urged them to perform to their capacity. "We're proud of the team that is going to play for Qatar in Thailand. We're community-loving people and it feels great that our team represents that spirit."

"You're all the future of the nation, go all out, support one another and do your best as one fighting unit in the upcoming matches. We extend our best wishes and I'm confident that you'll do better than before," al-Kuwari added.

Coach Aruna De Silva expressed optimism about his team's success and said, "The team has the average age of 16 plus but they've worked hard and are ready to perform well. Last year we had played the semis. Our target is definitely higher this time. We'll surely make Qatar proud with our display in Thailand."

"From Doha, we'll go to Sri Lanka first and play two practice matches there. Then, we'll fly to Thailand on December 7 for the Asia qualifiers," De Silva added.

QCA Operations Manager Mr Manzoor Ahmad said, "We've selected the best possible talent for this important event. All the players in the national squad went through an extensive preparation. Our team is young but the players are very promising. We've strong hopes for good results in Thailand."

Team manager Amin-Ul Islam said before departure: "The QCA provided the best of facilities for the team to get battle ready. Compared to previous years, we got the grassy ground and turf wickets for most of our work-outs and preparatory matches. This is the first time that the U-19 boys got so much intensive preps. It was possible due to deep interest in the team by the QCA president."

**SQUAD:** Hussain Khan (captain), Shubh Agarwal (vice-captain), Samil Vallyapurayil Sadiq, Patrick Romelo Akmeemana Kumarage, Aditya Piyush Makadia, Solaiman Mohamed, Kalith Charitha Anthony Amarasinghe, Afsanullah Obaidullah, Nivid Rakeshbhai Patel, Fateen Suhail Hakim, Bismillah Khan, Saud Kamal, Syed Yousef Tameem and Sheikh Jassim Mohamed Asam. Coach: Aruna De Silva

FOCUS

## Smith holds off Leishman to defend Australian PGA title

Reuters  
Gold Coast

Cameron Smith edged Marc Leishman by two strokes in a see-saw final round to defend his Australian PGA Championship title yesterday. Australian Smith, 25, made two bogeys in the first four holes as his three-shot overnight lead over compatriot Leishman evaporated but fought back brilliantly over the back nine to claim victory at the European Tour co-sanctioned event.

Smith's final round of two-under-par 70 took him to 16-under as he became the first player to successfully defend the title since Robert Allenby in 2001. Leishman finished on a total of 14-under after his final round of 69. His challenge faded with dropped shots on the 14th and 16th holes.

Englishman Ross McGowan broke the course record with a 63 to finish on 11-under in third place alongside Matthew Millar

(68). Smith said the final round had been "pretty special" and thanked his family and friends for keeping him going.

"I'm lost for words, I'm hopeless at this," he said in a video posted on the European Tour's Twitter page. Leishman had the advantage over his World Cup team partner after picking up three straight birdies from the third and another at the eighth to make the turn in 32. After his slow start Smith got a shot back on the sixth then had three birdies in four holes from the 12th to come home in 33 and secure his second European Tour title.

**KITAYAMA EARNS MAIDEN CAREER WIN AT EUROPEAN TOUR'S MAURITIUS OPEN**

Kurt Kitayama holed an eagle and two birdies in his first five holes to lay the platform for a maiden career win at the European Tour's Afrasia Bank Mauritius Open at the Four Seasons Golf Club yesterday.

American Kitayama, playing just his third tour event, carded

a final round 68 for a 20-under par total of 268 and a two-shot victory over Frenchman Mattieu Pavon and Seenappa Chikkara-ngappa from India, who were tied for second after both shooting final round 67s.

Kitayama, 25, came into the final round tied for the lead with South African Justin Harding (71), but while the latter faded, the American was boosted by an eagle on the par 5 fourth hole as he got to within 15 feet of the cup with his second shot and rolled in the putt. Having also birdied the third and then the fifth, it gave the Qualifying School graduate a lead he never relinquished as he landed birdies on the 13th and 17th, to go with bogeys on seven and 16.

Harding, who has two wins on the Asian Tour and a couple on South Africa's Sunshine Tour in 2018, finished alone in fourth place. Major winner Ernie Els was the big draw card in the field, but a three-over par 75 saw him finish -3 for the tournament and tied for 47th.

## Smith wins QGL golf tournament



Dwayne Smith and Elias Aboud emerged as winner and runner-up respectively in the golf tournament organised by the Qatar Golf Lovers at the Doha Golf Club. Thirty six golfers participated in the event, which was played on a Strokeplay format. Jason Sibley won the special prize for 'longest putt', Aaron Lee won the 'closest to pin', David Wills won the 'closest to rope' and Cherehzade Pedder won the 'longest drive' awards.

NBA

# Pistons beat Warriors to win 5th straight, Raptors roll on

'That's obviously a great win. You could tell by the crowd and the atmosphere tonight that we were facing a big team, and we protected our home floor'



Blake Griffin of the Detroit Pistons drives around Damian Jones of the Golden State Warriors during the second half at Little Caesars Arena in Detroit, Michigan. (Getty Images/AFP)

AFP  
Los Angeles

Blake Griffin scored 26 points as the Detroit Pistons spoiled the return of Golden State Warriors star Stephen Curry by beating the two-time defending NBA champions, 111-102, on Saturday.

Andre Drummond finished with 16 points and 19 rebounds for Detroit as the Pistons stretched their winning streak to five games.

"That's obviously a great win," Griffin said. "You could tell by the crowd and the atmosphere tonight that we were facing a big team, and we protected our home floor."

Curry missed 11 games with a groin problem. He shot 10 of 21 and drained three of nine from beyond the arc to finish with 27 points. But he started out rusty, missing his first three shots, all three-point attempts. Curry said it might take some time to get back into the flow of the Warriors offense.

"I just didn't have the right timing,

RESULTS

Toronto	106-95	Cleveland
Sacramento	111-110	Indiana
Houston	121-105	Chicago
Boston	118-109	Minnesota
Detroit	111-102	Golden State
Washington	102-88	Brooklyn
New York	136-134	Milwaukee

wasn't seeing the rim that well.

The second half was better and I am sure that will carry over each game," Curry said.

Kevin Durant scored 28 points and Klay Thompson added 21 in the losing effort for Golden State.

The Warriors couldn't overcome Detroit's dominance on the offensive boards, with just eight offensive rebounds compared to 14 for Detroit.

A half dozen Pistons finished in double figures. Detroit have now won two consecutive games over Golden State - after losing 12 of their previous 13.

The Pistons built an 11-point lead in the

second quarter and led 54-46 at the half.

BEST START EVER

In Cleveland, Raptors star Kawhi Leonard scored 34 points as Toronto overcame the absence of all-star guard Kyle Lowry and beat the struggling Cavaliers, 106-95.

"I feel great. The coaching staff has done a good job of making me feel comfortable out there," said Leonard, who joined the Raptors this season via a trade from the San Antonio Spurs.

"It is great just to be able to play basketball again and do something that I enjoy, added Leonard, who only played nine games last season for the Spurs due to a quadriceps injury.

Lowry, who leads the NBA in assists, was a late scratch, missing his first game of the season with a back injury.

The Raptors did not provide any details about his condition.

Fred VanVleet also scored 15 points for Toronto, who won their eighth consecutive contest and improved to a league best 20-4 record. They are 10-2 on the road.

The Raptors have reached the 20-win

mark quicker than any other team in franchise history.

VanVleet, who started in place of Lowry, drained consecutive clutch three-pointers with just over two minutes left in the fourth to pad the Raptors lead to 10 points. Jordan Clarkson and Tristan Thompson each scored 18 points for Cleveland, who lost their fourth in a row and dropped to 4-18 overall.

Cleveland got George Hill back after the starting guard missed 11 games with a sprained right shoulder, but he only delivered eight points.

Elsewhere, Emmanuel Mudiay scored 28 points and rookie Kevin Knox tallied a career-high 26 as the visiting New York Knicks outlasted the high-flying Milwaukee Bucks in overtime, 136-134.

Damyean Dotson and Tim Hardaway Jr added 21 points each, and Noah Vonleh contributed 15 points for the Knicks, who snapped a two-game losing skid.

Elsewhere, Russell Westbrook flirted with a triple double by delivering 23 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds as the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Atlanta Hawks, 124-109.

SPOTLIGHT

## Sorry, defense doesn't win championships anymore

By Dan Woike  
Los Angeles Times

Quin Snyder uttered "LeBron James" with total exasperation after his team lost to the Lakers in Los Angeles last month.

LeBron James was the reason the Utah defense didn't look so good down the stretch. LeBron James was the reason Snyder's team couldn't get a much-needed win against a team the Jazz could be competing with for a playoff spot. LeBron James was just too hard to stop.

But really, if the Jazz coach was being honest with himself, he'd know it's not just James who can give even the best defenses fits. It's teams that shoot a lot of three-pointers. It's the rule changes instituted this offseason. It's better players at younger ages. Utah, with its highly regarded defense, has gotten off to a slow start because the Jazz are not scoring enough to win games.

"It's not about defense," one longtime NBA scout and assistant said. "This is a scoring league now."

That, more than any other reason, could explain why the Jazz are one of the bigger disappointments 20-plus games into this season. A surprise run to the playoffs last season had some predicting the Jazz could be the second-best team in the Western Conference. They returned virtually the same cast that went to the second round behind one of the league's best defenses.

They were anchored by an exquisitely talented rim protector in Rudy Gobert. They had a top-line rookie guard, Donovan Mitchell, ready to build on a star-making first season. They kept tough-as-nails role players like Joe Ingles - all under the umbrella of Snyder's coaching, which is top-notch.

But with the arrival of December, the Jazz haven't been able to recapture last season's magic, looking like a possible playoff casualty in the loaded West. While things can change quickly in the conference - 14 teams are within 5½ games of first place (in the East, it's five) - Utah might have some fun-

damental flaws.

Multiple Western Conference scouts have written off the Jazz roster as simply not having enough offense to creep to the top of the standings. There's concern that players like Royce O'Neale, who were so important in their playoff push, aren't good enough to stay in the Jazz rotation.

It's partly why the team traded for sharpshooting Kyle Korver last week, sending out a versatile defender in Alec Burks, who would be valued on most rosters. But is a 37-year-old forward enough to bolster an offense that's among the lowest scoring in the league and inefficient (fourth worst in offensive rating)?

The bigger question: Can any team win with defense in the modern NBA?

"It's kind of tough. And I don't think it's just us," Utah forward Derrick Favors said. "I think there are a couple of teams in the league that still need to adjust to it. But you just have to evolve with it and find a way to play through it. We definitely have to evolve with the league and we definitely have to put points up on the board. But we still have to keep the defensive identity we had. We have to find that balance."

Memphis' early-season success is probably the best template for Utah, though center Marc Gasol and point guard Mike Conley are much more advanced offensively than Jazz counterparts Gobert and Ricky Rubio. For optimism, one can look to Utah's 2017-18 season, when the team opened 19-28 before reeling off 11 straight wins and taking off.

The team most likely to bounce back from a slow start is the Boston Celtics, who also stumbled into the regular season to extinguish any good feelings from last season's run to the Eastern Conference finals. The Celtics' problems appear to have more to do with integrating Gordon Hayward and Kyrie Irving, who were injured as Boston pushed Cleveland to a Game 7 last spring.

Most scouts think that situation will get sorted out - too much talent is rarely that big of a problem, though there can be exceptions.



Utah Jazz coach Quin Snyder.

NHL

# Spooner's first goal for Oilers helps stuff Knights

Reuters  
Edmonton

Ryan Spooner's first goal since joining the Oilers held up as the game winner and Connor McDavid scored yet another highlight-reel tally as host Edmonton beat the Vegas Golden Knights 2-1 Saturday night.

Oilers goalie Mikko Koskinen provided a 31-save effort to solidify his case as the club's new number-one goalie, having won every game in his team's three-game winning streak. By comparison, the Oilers won just two of 10 games prior to their current run.

Koskinen was especially strong at the bookends of the game - looming large not just in the final moments while the Golden Knights desperately pushed for the equalizer, but also in the early going when the visitors had the early jump.

Shots on goal were 8-2 for the Golden Knights when McDavid pulled his team out of the doldrums by opening the scoring at 6:11 of the first period.

Just after Koskinen made a couple of great saves, McDavid beat the defenseman on a one-on-one rush to create a partial breakaway and flicked a forehand shot as he appeared to be deking to his backhand for his 14th goal of the season.

William Karlsson tied the game 1-1 at 12:17 of the second period. Off the rush, Jonathan Marchessault sent the puck to the front of the net, and it took a lucky bounce right to Karlsson, whose shot went off the far post and into the cage to run his goal-scoring streak to four games.

Spooner restored the Edmonton lead at 5:50 of the third period with his first goal since going to the Oilers via trade from the New York Rangers last month.

Ty Rattie stole the puck near the end boards and Juhar Khaira sent it to the slot for Spooner, who quickly fired and beat Marc-Andre Fleury.

Fleury made 32 saves in a losing effort that saw Vegas's five-game winning streak snapped.

COYOTES MANHANDLE BLUES FOR THIRD CONSECUTIVE WIN

The Arizona Coyotes scored four goals in the second period, crushing the St. Louis Blues 6-1 at home on Saturday night.

It was the Coyotes' third straight win and only the second time this season they have won consecutive games.

They won five in a row Oct. 23 through November 2 but entered Saturday in next-to-last place in the Western Conference.

The Coyotes beat the Tampa Bay Lightning 7-1 on Oct. 27 - the only other time this season they had a high-

RESULTS

Ottawa	6-2	San Jose
Dallas	2-1	Vancouver
Toronto	5-3	Minnesota
Detroit	4-2	Boston
Montrea	5-2	Rangers
Tampa Bay	5-4	Florida
Winnipeg	4-3	New Jersey
Islanders	3-2	Columbus
Philadelphia	4-2	Pittsburgh
Arizona	6-1	St. Louis
Nashville	5-2	Chicago
Edmonton	2-1	Las Vegas

er-scoring game. Arizona got goals from Jakob Chychrun, Clayton Keller, Christian Fischer, Nick Cousins, Richard Panik and Alex Goligoski.

Keller and Derek Stepan each had two assists.

Robert Thomas scored for the Blues, who are 3-8-0 in their past 11 games.

Arizona goalie Adin Hill, a 22-year-old who has played just eight NHL games, made 25 saves to improve to 3-0-0 this season.

Chad Johnson made 38 saves as his record dropped to 2-6-0.

Chychrun scored his first goal of the season, which came on a power play and was the only tally of the first peri-

od. With 12:27 expired in the period, he received a pass from Keller and scored with a wrist shot from the slot.

Keller and Thomas traded goals in the first two minutes of the second period before Arizona got hot.

Keller took a pass from Nick Schmaltz and beat Johnson with a wrist shot. Thomas scored on a deflection of a shot from Jay Bouwmeester.

From there, it was all Coyotes.

Fischer cleaned up a Panik shot, scoring on the rebound out in front to give Arizona a 3-1 lead with 2:59 expired in the second. Stepan then set up Cousins with a slick pass across the slot. Cousins didn't miss his opportunity and it was 4-1 Coyotes with 8:21 gone in the second.

Finally, it was Panik, who rebounded a shot by Vinnie Hinostroza with 17:02 gone in the wild period. Goligoski's goal with 14:08 expired in the third period gave the Coyotes their final margin.

Nazem Kadri scored the go-ahead goal late in the third period, and Zach Hyman had two goals as the visiting Toronto Maple Leafs defeated the Minnesota Wild 5-3 in St. Paul, Minn., on Saturday night.

Kadri scored his eighth goal this season at 16:40 of the third on a puck deflected in front of the goal after a strong rush by Connor Brown. Hyman added his sixth goal of the season into an empty net at 19:04 of the third.



Vegas Golden Knights goaltender Marc-Andre Fleury stops a shot by Edmonton Oilers forward Ryan Spooner during the third period. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

## NFL

## Titans need to beat reeling Jets to have hope

Reuters  
New York

Quarterback Marcus Mariota misfired on one pass in his last outing, and the Tennessee Titans still lost by 17 points.

That setback leaves no margin for error the rest of the season for the Titans, who look to begin a late-season dash when they host the New York Jets yesterday. Tennessee (5-6) has dropped five of its last seven games as it entertains a New York squad that has lost five straight contests.

The Titans are one game behind the Baltimore Ravens and Indianapolis Colts, who currently are the leaders to claim the final AFC wild-card spot. But Tennessee's 3-6 conference mark leaves it as the lowest contender when it comes to the AFC's four five-win teams. And

safety Kevin Byard doesn't even want to hear the word "playoffs." "We are playing terrible right now," Byard told reporters. "We aren't playing good football and have to play better in all phases of the game. We aren't thinking about the wild card right now. We can't think about the playoffs or anything else." "The only thing that we can think about is what's right in front of us, and that's the New York Jets."

The struggling Jets (3-8) have lost by 14 or more points on four occasions during their slide. New York rookie quarterback Sam Darnold is listed as questionable. Darnold injured his right foot in Week 9 and has missed the Jets' last two games but he returned to practice on Wednesday and was a limited participant in three straight practices.

"I'm hopeful," Darnold told reporters in terms of being able to face the Titans on Sunday. "But at the same time, just see-

ing how I feel every single day, assess it after every practice and go from there."

NFL Network reported the Jets plan to start veteran Josh McCown, though Darnold could try to convince the team he's 100 percent during a pregame workout. It has been a spotty season for Darnold, the No. 3 overall pick from Southern California. He has completed just 55 percent of his passes and leads the league with 14 interceptions. He has thrown for 1,934 yards and 11 touchdowns.

The Titans allowed a staggering 281 rushing yards in Monday night's 34-17 loss to the Texans, and that could prompt New York to turn Isaiah Crowell loose.

But the 25-year-old running back hasn't even gained 50 yards in any of the past six games after posting a franchise-record 219 rushing yards against Denver on Oct. 7. Overall, he has 582 yards and six touchdowns.

The Jets aren't part of the playoff race and will miss the postseason for the eighth straight season. Fourth-year coach Todd Bowles is on the proverbial hot seat and the fan base has been boisterous in expressing disapproval.

Second-year safety Jamal Adams hears the chatter and can identify with the sentiments.

"We get a lot of negative comments and we understand it," Adams told reporters of the fans. "I get it. I get the frustration, but at the end of the day, we are hurting twice as much as you. So, just stick in there with us and we are going to figure it out."

Mariota is hoping to figure out what it takes to get a victory after his 95.7 completion percentage (22 of 23) against Houston was the second best in NFL history. The only better completion rate (96.6) came one day earlier by Philip Rivers (28 of 29) of the Los Angeles Chargers.

Mariota passed for 303 yards and two touchdowns against Houston but an early 10-0 lead evaporated into a disappointing loss that leaves the Titans in must-win mode.

The bright spot is that Tennessee plays four of its last five games at home, beginning with the Jets and a Dec. 6 contest against the Jacksonville Jaguars.

"We've got two games in less than a week," Mariota told reporters.

"It's all about us taking care of our business and focusing on what we can control. We haven't played complementary football. We haven't done a good enough job across the board.

"At the same time, there's no loss of confidence. We just got to go out there, find where we can all improve and bounce back."

The Jets will remain without safety Marcus Maye, who was placed on injured reserve Saturday with a shoulder injury.



Tennessee Titans safety Kevin Byard.

## BOXING

## Wilder draws with Fury to retain WBC heavyweight title

'I had a holy hand upon me tonight and brought me back. I've got good fighting spirit'



Deontay Wilder and Tyson Fury after their fight for WBC World Heavyweight Title at Staples Centre, Los Angeles, on Saturday. (Reuters)

AFP  
Los Angeles

Deontay Wilder and Tyson Fury battled to a controversial split-decision draw in their WBC heavyweight title showdown Saturday, triggering immediate demands from both camps for a rematch.

Wilder, who retains his WBC belt after 12 rounds of pulsating action, had Fury on the canvas twice at the Staples Center in Los Angeles but was unable to deliver the knockout he had promised his fans.

The three judges were divided on the outcome, with one scoring it 115-111 for Wilder, another 114-112 for Fury and the third 113-113. But while the scoring drew criticism, with many arguing that Fury had done enough to win, there was a marked absence of animosity after the bout.

Instead, the main talking point from a thrilling contest was Fury's miraculous recovery after being knocked down by

Wilder in the 12th round.

The 30-year-old Briton, who had boxed skillfully to frustrate and outpoint the aggressive but inaccurate Wilder, looked to have finally been beaten when the American champion uncorked a savage right-left combination that sent him sprawling to the floor.

Wilder celebrated as if he had won and members of his entourage moved to climb into the ring, only to stare in disbelief as Fury somehow cleared his head and got to his feet. "I really thought I had him out of there," Wilder said afterwards.

"I saw the eyes in his head rolling, I saw the ref checking on him and I thought, 'It's over! I don't know how he got up,'" the 33-year-old added.

Fury, who won the unified world title from Wladimir Klitschko in 2015 only to lose his belts as he battled depression, alcohol and drug problems, was equally baffled.

"I don't know," Fury said. "I had a holy hand upon me tonight and brought me back. I've got good fighting spirit."

**'WE'RE BOTH WARRIORS'**

While both men felt they had done enough to win the fight, both accepted the result. "I'm not going to sit here and complain, and scream robbery or whatever," Fury said. "I thought I won the fight. I'll leave the audience to make up their mind."

Wilder, who also had Fury on the deck in the ninth round, was adamant he had won. "I think with the two knockdowns I definitely won the fight," said Wilder afterwards. "We poured our hearts out tonight. We're both warriors, but with those two drops, I think I won the fight."

Wilder, who remains unbeaten after 41 fights, immediately called for a rematch.

"I would love for it to be my next fight," Wilder said. "Let's give the fans what they want to see. It was a great fight and let's do it again." Fury also said he hopes to arrange a rematch. "One hundred percent we'll do the rematch," Fury said.

"We are two great champions. Me and this man are the two best heavyweights on the planet," added Fury, who exited his

press conference after leading a rousing chorus of Don McLean's classic "American Pie."

**WHISTLING HAYMAKERS**

Until Wilder's sensational final round knockdown, Fury appeared to be heading for what would have been a remarkable upset. The self-proclaimed "Gypsy King", who returned to boxing this year after missing more than two years, had boxed cleverly to evade the heavy-hitting threat of Wilder for most of the fight. The American champion struggled to connect cleanly with Fury throughout an absorbing contest, all too often sending huge arcing haymakers whistling past Fury's head. Wilder landed just 71 of 430 punches thrown, or barely 17 percent.

Fury by contrast picked his moments to attack, finding Wilder with greater accuracy and causing a nasty swelling over the American's left eye.

Wilder, the more aggressive of the two fighters early on, quickly moved into the lead after the opening rounds.

But Fury gradually grew in confidence, regularly taunting

Wilder by throwing his arms up in the air or behind his back.

Wilder responded with increasingly desperate flurries of big punches, very few of which found their mark. As several former heavyweights had predicted beforehand, the longer the fight went on, the more Fury looked in control.

However, in the ninth round, Wilder finally made his mark, dropping Fury with a short hook that had the fans on their feet.

Fury however recovered well and regained his composure to resume where he had left off.

With a large contingent of British fans in the audience of 17,698 roaring him on, a victory suddenly seemed within reach. Wilder however suddenly found a devastating combination just when he needed it in the 12th round. A right hand sent Fury rocking backwards towards the deck and a brutal left hand on the way down appeared to be the coup de grace for the challenger.

Fury's extraordinary Lazarus act however ensured the fight would go to the judges.

## ALPINE SKIING

## Schmidhofer claims wins back-to-back WCup downhill

Reuters  
Montreal

Austrian Nicole Schmidhofer proved her surprise win in Friday's season-opening downhill at Lake Louise was no fluke, laying down an error-free run to win her second World Cup downhill in as many days at the course in Western Canada on Saturday.

The 29-year-old Schmidhofer sped down under sunny skies and fast, icy conditions in one minute 47.68 seconds to claim her second career World Cup victory since making her debut in 2010. Her Austrian team mate Cornelia Huetter finished second, 0.44 seconds back, and Swiss Michelle Gisin came third, 0.47 seconds behind the leader.

American Mikaela Shiffrin, last year's downhill day two winner at Lake Louise, finished 0.63 seconds down in fourth place after tentative turns midway through the course caused her early lead to vanish. The race was notable for the absence of American Lindsey Vonn, the most successful female ski racer in history who injured herself in a high-speed crash during a training run last week.

Vonn, who has previously said this season would be her last, on

Friday said she would probably delay her retirement so she could compete next season at Lake Louise, where she has enjoyed more success than at any other venue on the World Cup circuit.

**RESULTS OF THE SECOND WOMEN'S ALPINE WORLD CUP DOWNHILL**

1. Nicole Schmidhofer (AUT) 1:47.68
2. Cornelia Hutter (AUT) 1:48.12
3. Michelle Gisin (SUI) 1:48.15
4. Mikaela Shiffrin (USA) 1:48.31
5. Nicole Delago (ITA) 1:48.41
6. Ramona Siebenhofer (AUT) 1:48.52
7. Nadia Fanchini (ITA) 1:48.63
8. Corinne Suter (SUI) 1:48.96
9. Stephanie Venier (AUT) 1:49.07
10. Ester Ledecka (CZE) 1:49.11

**OVERALL STANDINGS:**

1. Mikaela Shiffrin (USA) 389 pts
2. Michelle Gisin (SUI) 233
3. Federica Brignone (ITA) 201
4. Nicole Schmidhofer (AUT) 200
5. Petra Vlhova (SVK) 196

**DOWNHILL STANDINGS:**

1. Nicole Schmidhofer (AUT) 200 pts
2. Michelle Gisin (SUI) 140
3. Cornelia Hutter (AUT) 106
4. Kira Weidle (GER) 84
5. Stephanie Venier (AUT) 79
6. Mikaela Shiffrin (USA) 79.



Nicole Schmidhofer of Austria reacts after her run in the ladies downhill race in the 2018 FIS Alpine Skiing World Cup at Lake Louise Ski Resort. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

**Ukraine's Gvozdyk flattens Stevenson to win WBC title**

Oleksandr Gvozdyk knocked out Adonis Stevenson with 13 seconds remaining in the 11th round to capture the World Boxing Council light heavyweight championship in Quebec City on Saturday. The unbeaten 31-year-old Gvozdyk unloaded a barrage of rights and lefts that sent the Canadian champion reeling. He then finished Stevenson off with a crushing right hand, leaving him leaning awkwardly against the corner ropes. Gvozdyk claimed the belt in his first shot at a major title and he did it by making the trip to Canada to face Stevenson on his home soil. Gvozdyk, who won an Olympic bronze medal for Ukraine at the 2012 Games, improved to 16-0 with 13 knockouts. Stevenson, 41, showed his age in the later rounds, looking tired and lacking power. He suffered just the second defeat of his career, dropping to 29-2-1 overall. Stevenson blasted Gvozdyk with a solid right halfway through the 10th round at the Videotron Centre. But the Ukrainian answered moments later with a five-punch combination that helped set the stage for his devastating knockout in the 11th.

HOCKEY WORLD CUP

# Spirited India play out 2-2 draw against Belgium

'With goal difference we are plus five and they are plus two, but it all comes down to that last game. We can forget about the two previous games, the next match is the one that will decide if we are in the quarter-final'



India's Simranjeet Singh (left) celebrates with teammates after scoring a goal against Belgium during the group stage match against Belgium at the 2018 Hockey World in Bhubaneswar yesterday. (AFP)

Hockey India  
Bhubaneswar

India and Belgium played out a thrilling draw to remain level on points at the top of Pool C on Day Five of the Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018. The 2-2 score-line leaves India at the top of the pool on goal difference ahead of the Red Lions, with everything to play for going into the final round of matches on December 8.

The Pool C action began when South Africa and Canada, two teams who were defeated on the opening day of competition, went head-to-head. South Africa dominated the opening period of their match against the Canadians and would have been ahead were it not for wonderful save from shot-stopper and Odisha Player of the Match David Carter, who gloved an Austin Smith penalty corner drag-flick onto his own crossbar.

The African champions continued their supremacy in the second period but came close to falling behind, with James Kirkpatrick being denied by a good block from Rassie Pieterse. Canada's resistance was finally broken

near the end of the third period thanks to Ngobile Ntuli, who moved past Carter before crashing a backhand shot into the unguarded net. It was a lead that lasted just two minutes, with Canada captain Scott Tupper firing a penalty stroke past goalkeeper Gowan Jones, who had replaced Pieterse at half time.

Canada's Red Caribou frustrated their opponents in the final stages, with South Africa replacing their goalkeeper with an outfield in an attempt to claim all three points and boost their hopes of getting out of the pool. However, it was not to be, with Canada claiming a share of the spoils while South Africa were left to rue their missed opportunities.

Speaking after the match, South African defender Austin Smith said: "We let ourselves down, and I feel pretty responsible for that with the corners. I thought we played better than Canada did, but when you get ten corners and don't score any you don't win hockey games. It's frustrating and makes going through to the next round very difficult. I know mathematically it is possible, if we beat Belgium, but the overwhelming feeling is one of frustration."

A sensational atmosphere greeted the players of India and Belgium as they walked out onto the turf at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium, with a sell-out 15,000 people packed into the venue to witness a key match in the race for a first place pool finish and the subsequent place in the quarter-finals that comes with it.

The Red Lions had the best of the first quarter and got their reward eight minutes in, using a clever video referral to win a penalty corner that was clinically dispatched by Alexander Hendrickx. India had chances either side of the first quarter break, although a moment of inspiration from Tom Boon in the second quarter almost doubled the advantage when his improvised deflection hit the frame of the Indian goal.

Much to the delight of the home crowd, India came out firing in the third quarter, piling pressure on the Rio 2016 Olympic silver medallists. Eventually the leveller arrived from the penalty spot, with a stroke being awarded after a goal-bound penalty corner effort hit the body of a Belgian player on the goal-line.

Harmanpreet Singh proved to be the coolest man in the stadium, soaking up all the tension and channelling

it into an effort that was hard and true, wrongfooting Belgium goalkeeper Vincent Vanasch to find the bottom left corner.

The Kalinga Stadium erupted two minutes into the fourth and final quarter when Simranjeet Singh scored his third goal of the competition from close range, putting India very much in the driving seat for that crucial first place finish in the pool.

It proved to be temporary, with Belgium replacing their goalkeeper with an outfield player to turn up the heat on the home favourites. It paid off four minutes from the end when Simon Gougard slapped home an equaliser after a decisive Belgium move ripped through the Indian defence to complete the scoring.

Commenting about the race to finish first in Pool C - a position currently held by the host nation on goal difference over today's opponents - India head coach Harendra was honest in his assessment.

"I think it is wide open," said Harendra. "With goal difference we are plus five and they are plus two, but it all comes down to that last game. We can forget about the two previous games, the next match is the one that will de-

cide if we are in the quarter-final."

The action continues on Monday 3rd of December with the second round of Pool A matches taking place. At 1700 IST, Spain and France will aim to recover from their respective opening day defeats and get some crucially important points on the board. That match is followed by a clash between two teams who were victorious in their first matches, with New Zealand facing Olympic champions Argentina at 1900.

Speaking ahead of his team's meeting with Argentina match, Black Sticks head coach Darren Smith said: "This is an exciting opportunity for us to match up against the Olympic Champions at the World Cup. They are a high-quality team with very skillful forwards, composure and a deadly penalty corner. We also know that the points for this game are critical to get to the next round so we will be targeting the three on offer. We are looking forward to matching up against them."

Argentina head coach German Orozco said: "For us, we need to improve our game both when we are in possession and also without it. We want to continue building confidence in the team"

RUGBY

## Jantjies seals Barbarians comeback win over Pumas

AFP  
Twickenham, United Kingdom

South African Elton Jantjies dropped a goal late in the match to add the final polish to a remarkable comeback by the Barbarians in beating Argentina 38-35 at Twickenham on Saturday.

The match provided early seasonal pantomime knockabout fare in typically crowd-pleasing Barbarians style. Their last foray at RFU headquarters had added to England and Eddie Jones's post Six Nations depression when a Chris Ashton hat-trick contributed to a 63-45 humbling.

The Barbarians' invitational team has been playing national sides on a regular basis since 1948. This time there was a preponderance of South Africans in the line-up - which was coached by Springboks handler Rassie Erasmus - and for a while the Barbarians looked to be heading for heavy defeat.

Tries by Matias Orlando, Ramiro Moyano, captain Pablo Matera and Sebastian Cancelliere saw them open up a 28-7 lead - former Pumas great Juan Manuel Leguizamón touching down for the Baa-Baas.

A penalty try and a score from Springboks captain Siya Kolisi reduced the deficit to 28-21.

Julian Montoya scored for Argentina, but tries from South African duo Damian de Allende and Lood de Jager and Jantjies' late kick sealed a thrilling win.

"It's a massive privilege representing this historic club," said de Jager. "The guys just went out there and put everything on the line and it's good to get a win."

"One thing that's always guaranteed from a Baa-Baas side is team spirit."

For Matera and his players it was a disappointing way to end their Northern hemisphere tour which yielded little in the way of results - they lost to Six Nations champions Ireland, France and Scotland - but fatigue would have played a role coming off the Rugby Championship.

"This is not the way we wanted to end the tour," said Matera, who head coach Mario Ledesma appointed skipper for the tour.

"The result is not what we expected but it was a good year for us if you see it in general (they recorded wins over Australia and South Africa in The Rugby Championship). We are growing a lot as a team and we are on a good path," added the 25-year-old backrow forward.

Meanwhile Alex Lozowski showed little mercy to his former side Wasps contributing 19 points in Premiership champions Saracens 29-6 victory. Lozowski's points haul included converting the only two tries of the contest which stretched the Saracens Premiership win streak to nine matches this term and 16 in all dating back to last season.

OLYMPICS

# Broadcasters gear up for the biggest show on earth

AFP  
Madrid

Clock-watching is an integral part of any Olympic Games but even the most eagle-eyed sporting anoraks might be forgiven for missing the fact that Sunday marks 600 days until the start of the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

For most people, it is not actually a particularly significant milestone but for 160 people of 35 nationalities beavering away in a building overlooking a highway in Madrid, the pressure of organising the biggest television show on earth just went up a notch.

These are the people of the Olympic Broadcasting Services (OBS), a wing of the International Olympic Committee responsible since 2008 for providing the pictures of every competition which are beamed around the

world. The size of the audience is phenomenal as is the money that is generated.

Over five billion viewers tuned in for the last Games in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 as opposed to 3.4 billion for this year's football World Cup.

Television stations from around the world have dished out more than six billion dollars for the rights to the Games in Tokyo - broadcasting the event is a complex, lucrative business managed from the Spanish capital.

"Preparing and planning for the games is an ongoing function, so as we speak we are obviously very close to the finalisation of our plans for Tokyo," says Yiannis Exarchos, the imposing Greek boss of the OBS.

"But we have already started quite detailed planning for the winter games in Beijing (2022) and we have already started engaging with Paris (2024) and Los

Angeles (2028)."

A 'BURDEN' ON HOST CITIES

The first time pictures were beamed live from the Olympics was Berlin in 1936. It wasn't until the 1964 Games, also in Tokyo, that pictures went live around the world.

Back then it was the responsibility of the host nation to provide the coverage and that is how it stayed until 2008.

"During the games we employ a team of more than 7,000 professionals coming from 90 different countries, we have 1,000 cameras, hundreds of thousands of kilometres of cables," says Exarchos.

"This started to become a big burden for the organising committee as the Games grew bigger and more complex.

"As early as the Games of Atlanta (1996), it was made clear that the IOC should do something to support the cities."



So it was that the IOC created OBS in 2001 to provide coverage of all Olympic and Paralympic Games.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Beijing 2008 marked the OBS' first outing and it comes as no surprise to discover that Sotiris Salamouris, who is in charge of technology at OBS, was back in Beijing last month to discuss the

next Winter Olympics in 2022.

"We need to have a good number of discussions with the organising committee in terms of the infrastructures they need to make available for us," says Salamouris. "The IBC, that is the priority."

The IBC is the International Broadcast Centre, a bustling hub set up in each host city where television channels from all over

the world get the signal from OBS to broadcast back home.

"We need to work quite early with the organising committee to find this facility, to secure it, to agree about timelines, additional works necessary.

"This is what we have begun with Paris," says Salamouris looking ahead already to the Summer Olympics of 2024.

Given that the IOC is based in Lausanne, it may raise an eyebrow to see that the OBS is centred in Madrid.

"It does not come from heaven, it comes from (Manolo) Romero," jokes IOC member Juan Antonio Samaranch Salisachs whose father served 21 years as president of the IOC.

A Spaniard and in charge of radio and television coverage of the Games since Mexico in 1968, Romero was appointed head of OBS when it was created and insisted on the headquarters being in Madrid, where he lived.

'LIFELINE' FOR SPORT

"Major sports events remain the holy grail of broadcasting," says Exarchos.

Demand for television rights is constantly on the increase, and this, he points out, will continue with the emergence of new digital players in the market.

"Ninety percent of the TV rights go for the support of the Olympic movement and the development of sport," he says.

The IOC keeps the rest. "The funding that comes from the television rights of the Games is a lifeline for the support of sports."

"The vast majority of the sports which are in the Olympic programme would have a hard time surviving if it were not for revenues coming from the rights."

And with that, Exarchos returns to work, ticking off another day on the road to Tokyo.

## PREVIEW

## Yasir holds the key in Pakistan-NZ decider

AFP  
Abu Dhabi

Leg-spinner Yasir Shah is set to become the fastest bowler to reach 200 Test wickets as he holds the key for Pakistan to win the series-deciding third and final Test against New Zealand starting in Abu Dhabi today.

The 32-year-old needs just five wickets to shatter Australian leg-spinner Clarrie Grimmett's record of completing 200 wickets in 36 Tests, way back in 1936.

That will be icing on the cake as Pakistan hope Yasir — whose 14 wicket match haul crushed New Zealand by an innings and 16 runs in the second Test in Dubai — can come good again.

Yasir took eight wickets in the first Test here but Pakistan

fell agonisingly short, losing by four runs before levelling the series at 1-1. Pakistan captain Sarfraz Ahmed agreed hopes are pinned on Yasir, who has 195 wickets in 32 Tests.

"The way Yasir is bowling he has got his rhythm back and we hope that with the return of his form he will do his best to win us this Test and the series," said Sarfraz yesterday.

Until last year the Sheikh Zayed stadium had been a happy hunting ground for Pakistan, having won six of the ten Tests with four draws.

But they lost to Sri Lanka last year and against New Zealand after being set low targets of 136 and 176 runs, respectively, a fact Sarfraz said hurt his team.

"We need to bat long and that we did in the last Test," said Sarfraz whose team put a big 418-5 declared in Dubai. "Toss will again be crucial because in



New Zealand cricketers gather prior to a training session in Abu Dhabi yesterday.

Asia teams like to bat first and post big totals."

Besides Yasir, Pakistan also hope fast-rising left-arm pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi gives them an edge after he replaced injured medium pacer Mohamed Abbas.

The 18-year-old pacer took back to back four-wicket hauls in the 1-1 drawn one-day series against New Zealand last month before getting seven wickets against England Lions in a four-day match, also in Abu Dhabi.

"Shaheen is improving day by day and has talent," said Sarfraz of Shaheen who is six and a half feet tall.

Sarfraz admits New Zealand can be dangerous as they have the motivation to win an away series against Pakistan for the first time since 1969.

"New Zealand is a good team with experienced players who know Test cricket well," said Sarfraz. "They have good bowl-

ers so we will also try to play good cricket."

New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson admitted Yasir will be a dangerous proposition.

"He (Yasir) is a world class bowler," said Williamson. "He clearly had a fantastic last game and bowled a number of very nice deliveries and used the conditions really, really well."

New Zealand will gain confidence from their second innings batting with return to form of Ross Taylor who made 81, Henry Nicholls scored 77 and Tom Latham's 50.

"There were some positives we would need to build from," said Williamson of his team's 312 all out. "It's really an exciting prospect and the guys really are looking forward to the decider." New Zealand have the option of resting Trent Boult and bringing in Tim Southee, who has yet to play in the series.

## EMPHATIC

## Mehidy's rich haul as Bangladesh thrash Windies

Off-spinner bags 12 wickets in the match to help hosts complete 2-0 sweep

AFP  
Dhaka

Off-spinner Mehidy Hasan claimed a career-best 12 wickets as Bangladesh thumped West Indies by an innings and 184 runs in Dhaka yesterday to sweep the two-match series.

Hasan took 7-58 and 5-59 in the first and second innings respectively to help the Tigers bowl out the visitors for 111 and 213 runs on the third day of the second Test.

Bangladesh made 508 runs in their only innings at Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium to claim their first-ever victory by an innings margin.

It was Bangladesh's first Test series win in four years, after they won the opener in Chittagong by 64 runs.

West Indies wilted for 213 all out in the second innings after earning the dubious distinction of becoming the first side ever to be asked to follow-on by Bangladesh in a Test match.

Big-hitting Shimron Hetmyer scored an attacking 93 off 92 balls with nine sixes and a four to prevent a total Caribbean collapse in the second innings.

But Mehidy stopped Hetmyer from scoring his maiden Test century when the batsman went for a 10th sixth, but wound up delivering it to Mohamed Mithun at long-on.

He then removed Jomel Warrican to complete his second five-wicket haul of the game before finishing with match figures of 12-117 — the best ever Test haul for a Bangladeshi bowler.

The 21-year-old spinner improved his own record of 12-159 against England in 2016 at the same ground.

Kemar Roach provided late entertainment with an unbeaten 37 off 49 balls with seven fours, but it only delayed the inevitable.

Tajjul Islam wrapped up the innings and match when he trapped Sherman Lewis for 20 to finish with 3-40.

Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan hailed his team's effort after the match.

"We did the process right and we did well in every department. Overall a very good team effort," he said.

West Indies' trouble began from the very start of the third day's play when they lost five wickets in less than an hour, af-



Bangladesh bowler Mehidy Hasan (2nd L) celebrates with his teammates after the dismissal of the West Indies' Devendra Bishoo (C) at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka yesterday.

ter resuming their first innings on 75-5.

Hetmyer, who also top-scored in the first innings with 39, hit Mehidy for a six in the second over of the day, but the off-spinner flummoxed him for a sharp return catch to start the collapse.

Bangladesh never looked back as Mehidy claimed three more wickets in quick time, before Shakib wrapped up the innings to finish with 3-27.

West Indies skipper Kraigg Brathwaite lamented the defeat.

"As batsmen we didn't do our jobs.

We didn't get a partnership and we let ourselves down on the field," he said.

The West Indies will also play three one-day internationals and three Twenty20 inter-

nationals against Bangladesh during their month-long tour.

● Bangladesh selectors yesterday recalled Tamim Iqbal and Shakib Al Hasan to a full-strength squad for the one-day international series against West Indies.

The pair missed the Tigers' last ODI series against Zimbabwe in October due to injury, but were deemed fit for the upcoming three-match contest in Bangladesh.

All-rounder Shakib has captained Bangladesh during their wins in both Tests over West Indies — their first series victory in four years.

Opening batsman Tamim has not played since injuring his wrist during the Asia Cup opener against Sri Lanka in September. He was expected to return for the Test series but a rib injury delayed his comeback.

He was only cleared to play the ODIs on Saturday. Selectors have also included him in the squad for a warm-up match against West Indies scheduled on December 6.

## DHAKA SCORECARD

<b>Bangladesh first innings</b> 508 (Mahmudullah 136, Shakib Al Hasan 80, Shadman Islam 76, Liton Das 54, K.Brathwaite 2-57, K. Roach 2-61, J.Warrican 2-91, D. Bishoo 2-109)	<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-0 (Brathwaite), 2-6 (Powell), 3-17 (Ambris), 4-20 (Chase), 5-29 (Hope), 6-86 (Hetmyer), 7-88 (Bishoo), 8-92 (Roach), 9-110 (Dowrich), 10-111 (Lewis)	<b>Extras (b4, lb3)</b> 9
<b>West Indies first innings</b> (overnight 75-5) K.Brathwaite b Shakib 0 K.Powell b Mehidy 4 S.Hope b Mehidy 10 S.Ambris b Shakib 7 R.Chase b Mehidy 0 S.Hetmyer c & b Mehidy 39 S.Dowrich lbw b Mehidy 37 D.Bishoo c Shadman b Mehidy 1 K.Roach c Liton b Mehidy 1 J.Warrican not out 5 S.Lewis lbw b Shakib 0	<b>West Indies second innings</b> K.Brathwaite lbw b Shakib 1 S.Dowrich c Soumya b Mehidy 6 S.Hope c Shakib b Mehidy 25 S.Ambris lbw b Tajjul 4 R.Chase c Mominul b Tajjul 3 S.Hetmyer c Mithun b Mehidy 93 D.Bishoo c Soumya b Nayeem 3 K.Roach c Soumya b Mehidy 12 J.Warrican c & b Mehidy 0 S.Lewis lbw b Tajjul 20	<b>Total (all out, 59.2 overs)</b> 213 <b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-2 (Brathwaite), 2-14 (Powell), 3-23 (Ambris), and 4-29 (Chase) 5-85 (Hope), 6-96 (Dowrich), 7-143 (Bishoo), 8-166 (Hetmyer), 9-171 (Warrican), 10-213 (Lewis) <b>Bowling:</b> Shakib 14-3-65-1, Mehidy 20-2-59-5, Tajjul 10-21-40-3, Mahmudullah 1-0-6-0, Nayeem 14-2-34-1 <b>Result:</b> Bangladesh won by innings and 184 runs <b>Series result:</b> Bangladesh wins series 2-0 <b>Toss:</b> Bangladesh <b>Umpires:</b> Aleem Dar (PAK) Ruchira Palliyaguruge (SRI) <b>TV Umpire:</b> Richard Illingworth (ENG) <b>Match Referee:</b> Andy Pycroft (ZIM)
<b>Extras (b4, lb3)</b> 7		
<b>Total (all out, 36.4 overs)</b> 111		

## SPOTLIGHT

## Aussies will still be fierce opponents, promises Paine

AFP  
Sydney

Australia will be as fired up as ever against India despite their new vow to play with a smile, captain Tim Paine said yesterday while warning his pace attack not to get "too emotional".

The teams meet in the first of four Tests at Adelaide from Thursday in the wake of a scathing review into the ball-tampering scandal in South Africa which criticised Australian cricketers for "playing the mongrel" against opponents.

In response, the team produced a so-called Players' Pact, urging Australians to "compete with us, smile with us, fight with us, dream with us".

Paine has also pledged to shake opponents' hands before each match as a mark of respect in a bid to change the culture within the side.

The move to tone down their infamous abrasive attitude was criticised by former skipper Michael Clarke last week, but Paine insisted Sunday the aggression would still be on show.

"It's been received well, I haven't heard otherwise," he told cricket.com.au of the handshake idea. "I just think it's a bit of a no brainer, just a show of sportsmanship."

"It doesn't mean we'll be the nicest team in the world to play against by any stretch of the imagination."

"We'll still be really competitive and fired up out on the ground, but I think you do need to have that bit of respect between the two sides."

The Australians will be coming face-to-face with famously combative Indian skipper Virat Kohli, who thrives on the verbal banter and has never been shy of riling the opposition.

Paine concedes his pace attack of Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazle-



wood and Pat Cummins can get hot under the collar in the heat of competition, and urged them to not rise to any bait.

"I think our fast bowling attack...if they play purely on skill, they're going to trouble him," Paine said of Kohli, who has scored five centuries in his two previous Test tours of Australia.

"At times when we get too emotional, we can lose our way a little bit. So it's a really fine line."

"There's going to be times when they're going to get a bit fiery, I'm sure. But we need to be mindful of keeping ourselves calm enough so we can execute our skills as well."

Despite his warnings, Paine said he was as keen as anyone for the team to play to their strengths, and if that meant some sledging to give them an edge then so be it.

"It's just about picking your time and picking your moment and doing what the team requires," he said.

"I think it's important that guys play the way that suits them. If you're someone who likes to get into a contest one-on-one with someone like Virat, then go for your life."

"But I don't think it needs to be over the top and I don't think guys who aren't normally like that need to start doing it."

## Veteran Vijay has no fear of Australia

Sydney: India's Murali Vijay is ready to capitalise on a horror injury to young gun Prithvi Shaw, declaring he has no fear of Australian conditions after almost certainly securing his spot for this week's first Test.

The veteran opening batsman smacked an entertaining 129, including 16 fours and five sixes, in a warm-up match against a Cricket Australia XI on Saturday.

After being dropped following a pair in the second Test against England this year, the 34-year-old was seen to be in a fight with incumbent KL Rahul to open the batting alongside Shaw in Adelaide.

But a nasty ligament injury on Friday ruled out the teenager — who has been compared to Sachin Tendulkar — making Vijay and Rahul odds-on to face the new ball together again.

Others with an outside chance include Shikhar Dhawan or even uncapped Mayank Agarwal.

"We come from the same part of India, so we understand each

other well," Vijay said of Rahul, who scored 62 in India's second innings against the CA XI.

"He is a good guy to bat with and he is fun. Hopefully we can carry that momentum forward into the first Test."

The pair have batted 25 times together at Test level and Vijay scored 53 and 99 four years ago in Adelaide, a venue he says he likes.

"It suits me because I'm a batsman who likes to play off the back foot," he said.

"Australia is one place where you get the bounce so you can play shots."

"It always feels good to go to grounds where you have scored runs, it helps you a lot and I have good memories of it and looking forward to the Adelaide Test." After being axed following his Lord's failure, Vijay worked his way back into contention through a spell with Essex and said he had never given up hope of earning a 60th Test cap.