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# GULF TIMES SPORT



FOOTBALL

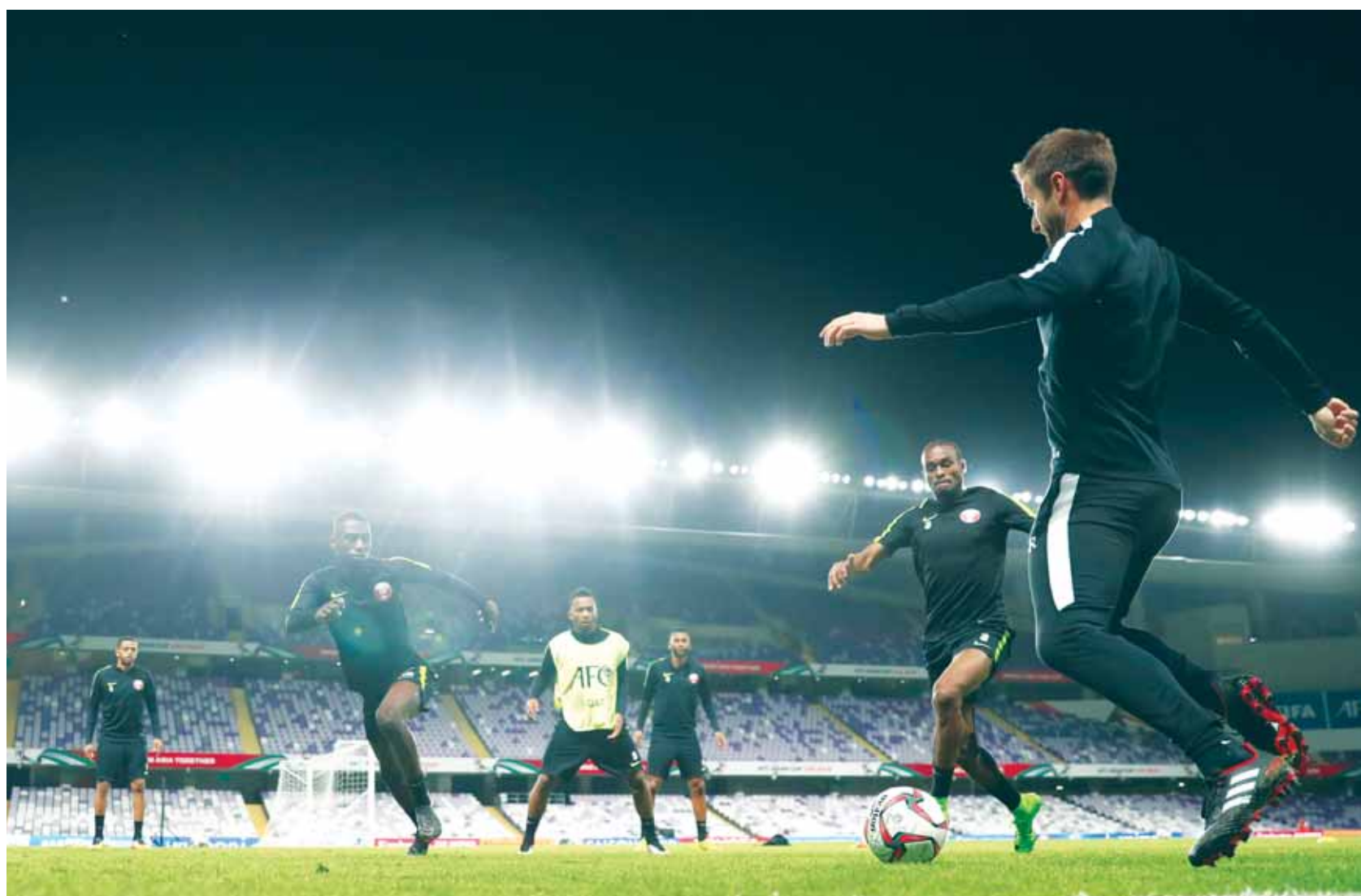
**Iraq stun Vietnam with late Adnan free kick**

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FOOTBALL / AFC ASIAN CUP **QATAR VS LEBANON, 7PM**

# Sanchez backs young Qatar squad ahead of opener

Qatar will open their AFC Asian Cup campaign against Lebanon today



Qatar players take part in a training session in Al Ain on the eve of their AFC Asian Cup match against Lebanon yesterday. PICTURES: Fadi al-Assaad

**AFC**  
Al Ain, United Arab Emirates

Qatar coach Felix Sanchez is confident his young squad can match the best in the continent as they kick off their AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 campaign against Lebanon in Group E in Al Ain's Hazza bin Zayed Stadium today.

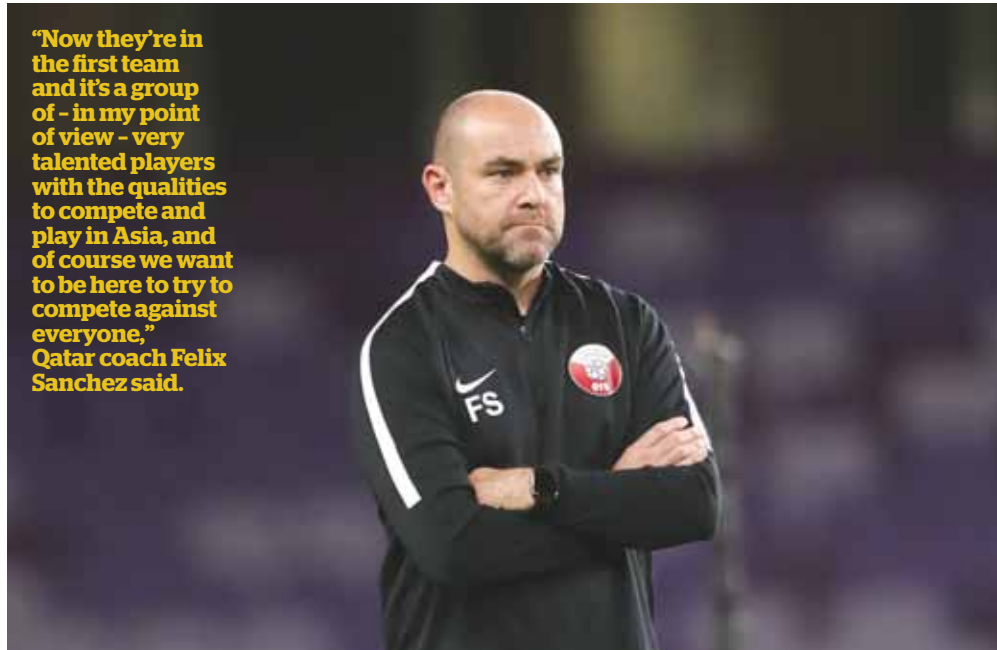
Sanchez's squad is one of the most youthful among the 24 nations represented at the tournament, with seven of the players who have travelled to the United Arab Emirates having graduated from the side that won the 2014 AFC U19 Championship in Myanmar.

And with the country continuing to build towards their hosting of the FIFA World Cup in 2022, Sanchez believes the AFC Asian Cup will be the perfect proving ground for his players.

"There is a group of players that played in (AFC U-19 Championship) some years ago and had a good achievement," said the Spaniard, who coached the U-19 team and also worked with the country's U-23 squad before taking over the senior side.

"Now they're in the first team and it's a group of - in my point of view - very talented players with the qualities to compete

**"Now they're in the first team and it's a group of - in my point of view - very talented players with the qualities to compete and play in Asia, and of course we want to be here to try to compete against everyone," Qatar coach Felix Sanchez said.**



and play in Asia, and of course we want to be here to try to compete against everyone.

"But we're going to focus and we can't look further than the game against Lebanon because this competition is a few games and you need to be OK in all of them."

Qatar have twice reached the quarter-finals of the AFC Asian Cup - in 2000 and on home soil in 2011 - but Sanchez refused to

be drawn on his side's expectations at this year's tournament as he declared his squad fully fit for the Finals.

"Everyone is fine and ready to play," he said. "We know Lebanon. We saw them playing, we know their strengths and we know it will be a hard game and we're only focused on that."

"We're going to try to show that we're able to compete against all the Asian teams we're

going to face in the competition, to compete and compete well and get results.

"How far we will reach is difficult to say, but I'm quite sure that this group of players are able to compete against all teams in Asia and it is time to show they have the quality and ability to do well."

Lebanon will be appearing at the AFC Asian Cup for the first time since hosting the tourna-

ment in 2000 and, while coach Miodrag Radulovic is delighted to be leading the country to the Finals, he stressed his team would not be overawed by the occasion or the Qataris.

"Everybody in Lebanese football is dreaming about this competition for 20 years and we're proud that we're in this company," he said. "We're living the dreams of the players and the football fans of Lebanon."

"We're in a strong group, but my players are ready to give a good performance and we will be fighting for each point and each goal. Our focus is on the first game. It's a very important game. Not decisive, but important. I know very well what to expect from such a level but I'm sure my players will have the possibility and the quality to make a performance and we are ready for tomorrow's game."

"Qatar is really a very good team, I made a good analysis of them. They have built a team for the world championship, they have very good balance in the team, they have the best player of Asia in the team and the Spanish coach is a long time with the players. But also we are together almost four years and we built a good team. We have our system and we have tactical discipline and I'm optimistic about tomorrow's game."

DAKAR RALLY

# Loeb wins second stage, De Villiers leads

Reuters  
Lima, Peru

Nine times world champion Sebastien Loeb won the second stage of the Dakar Rally in the Peruvian desert yesterday, with South African Giniel De Villiers taking the overall lead for his Toyota team.

De Villiers, the 2009 Dakar champion, leads teammate Bernhard ten Brinke by 28 seconds with Spaniard Nani Roma third in a Mini, 42 seconds off the pace after the 342km timed stage from Pisco to San Juan de Marcona.

Loeb had started the day 13th and ended it in fifth place, one minute and 56 seconds off the lead but with his 11th career stage win on the Dakar - even if he was almost reeled in by Roma at the finish.

"In the end, it was a good strategy, because it was advantageous for us to start behind the leaders, even if we were a bit further back than we would have liked," said the Frenchman.

"It was a good special (stage) with no major mistakes. I thought the pace was good."

I'm getting a good feeling back, because I've only done about 100km of testing since the Dakar last year.

"I'm not quite at the same level as last year, but it's working well for the moment."

Qatar's overnight leader Nasser Al-Attiyah, who is driving a Toyota, opened the road for the rest and dropped back to eighth place, nearly three and a half minutes adrift of De Villiers.

Spaniard Carlos Sainz, the defending champion, was sixth overall and lost time with two punctures.

Argentine driver Orlando Teranovna, driving a Mini 4x4, retired after crashing out halfway through the stage. The former stage winner was taken to hospital for checks after suffering back pain.

Stephane Peterhansel, a record 13 times Dakar winner, lost some 15 minutes after a lengthy stop in the dunes during the stage before Mini teammate Cyril Despres came to the rescue.

"We started with some electrical problems inside the car: no microphones, no air-conditioning, no wipers, nothing was OK. I lost my concentration a little bit, and after I got stuck in a really bad place," said the Frenchman.



Peugeot driver Sebastien Loeb and co-driver Daniel Elena in action during the ongoing Dakar Rally 2019. (AFP)

## Nasser al-Attiyah is 'clear favourite' for 2019 Dakar: Sainz

Autosport  
Lima

Carlos Sainz says early Dakar leader Nasser al-Attiyah has emerged as a "clear favourite" from the first 84 competitive kilometres of this year's event.

Al-Attiyah made light work of the opening stage of the 2019 Dakar, running second through the dunes behind Sainz before catching the Spaniard's Mini Buggy with around 15 kilometres to go.

The Toyota driver will take a 1m59s lead into the second stage.

While admitting that he's happier running behind al-Attiyah, Sainz says the first day of running proved just how difficult both the experienced dune racer and the Toyota HiLux will be to beat on outright pace.

"The section has been similar to the area we did last year at this stage, so we knew what we were going to find," said Sainz. "We have been calm, since we did not want to open [the second stage]."

"[Tuesday] is already a day to push. But the truth is that I see the Toyotas quite strong."

"Al-Attiyah is the clear favourite, he is in the courtyard of his house."



"Although it is true that last year he made a couple of mistakes and showed that he is not infallible in this terrain." The Qatari driver claimed that he too wasn't pushing 100% on his way to the first stage win, with his focus on his own pace rather than Sainz and the chasing pack.

"Today was a good day. We won the stage [but] we didn't really push," he said.

"I'm happy with the car and the BF Goodrich tyre, it's a new tyre for this Dakar. It looks like it's going really well."

"I caught Carlos in the last 15 kilometres, but I stayed behind him."

"I just needed to keep my speed, because it doesn't change, one minute or 10 seconds, it's the same."

"The plan was to just make good speed. I saw I won the stage with a good time, and I'm happy."



## AFC ASIAN CUP

# Iraq stun Vietnam with late Adnan free kick

'If I am honest, we also need to be even better than we were in the second half, which was obviously better than the first'



Iraq's Ali Adnan (third from right) celebrates with teammates after scoring a goal during the 2019 AFC Asian Cup group D match against Vietnam in Abu Dhabi yesterday. (AFP)

Reuters  
Al Ain, United Arab Emirates

Iraq's Ali Adnan scored with a curling free kick in the final minute as the former champions were twice forced to come from behind to beat Vietnam 3-2 in the Asian Cup yesterday.

Italy-based winger Adnan placed his strike high and to the left of Vietnam goalkeeper Dang Van Lam to give 2007 winners Iraq a barely-deserved victory in their opening Group D encounter in Abu Dhabi.

"It is very important to get three points in the group stage of this tournament," said Iraq coach Srecko Katanec.

"It was tough at times, but I am sure we will develop as the

## Saudi pick up win over 10-man North Korea

AFP  
Dubai

Three-time winners Saudi Arabia laid down a marker as they beat 10-man North Korea at the Asian Cup yesterday. The Saudis, humbled at last year's World Cup in Russia, looked far more at home in neighbouring United Arab Emirates as they tore North

competition goes on. If I am honest, we also need to be even better than we were in the second half which was obviously better than the first.

Korea apart 4-0 in their opening Group E game. The Green Falcons attacked relentlessly in the opening stages and Hatan Bahbri put them in front in the 28th minute, turning defender Ri Il Jin inside-out and firing into the far corner. They were 2-0 up nine minutes later, when Hussain Almoqahwi's free-kick glanced off the outstretched boot of Mohammed al-Fatih and past Ri Myong Guk in the North Korean goal.

North Korea already had a mountain to climb but their plight worsened just before half-time, when Han Kwang Song received his second yellow card for bringing down Almoqahwi. Salem al-Dawsari made it 3-0 with a smart finish on 69 minutes before Fahad al-Muwallad bagged a soft fourth goal against an exhausted Korean defence three minutes from time.

"I saw today who can and cannot play going forward, who is in a good condition and who is not."

In a game strewn with defen-

sive errors, Vietnam took the lead in the 24th minute when Ali Faez back-heeled the ball into his own goal after a mix-up with goalkeeper Jalal Hassan.

Mohanad Ali levelled for Iraq 11 minutes later when he dispossessed Que Ngoc Hai 25 metres from goal before driving into the penalty area and slotting past Van Lam.

Vietnam reclaimed the lead three minutes before the break when Nguyen Trong Hoang's low shot was parried by Hassan and Nguyen Cong Phuong tapped in the rebound.

Iraq, however, were level again on the hour mark when Humam Tariq slid home from close range, making the most of Vietnam's inability to clear the ball following Ali's downward header.

The teams looked destined to share the points, only for Adnan to give Van Lam no chance with his curling effort into the top corner.

## SPOTLIGHT

## Lippi says China facing striker crisis

AFP

Al Ain, United Arab Emirates

Marcello Lippi said an influx of foreign forwards had decimated China's striking stocks and could damage their Asian Cup campaign after an unconvincing start in the United Arab Emirates.

China's threadbare options up front were underlined when makeshift forward Yu Dabao grabbed the winner in Monday's 2-1 win over debutants Kyrgyzstan, which also left key attacker Wu Lei nursing a suspected collarbone injury.

Yu played as a defender last season for Beijing Guoan and Lippi said the overseas forwards flooding the cashed-up Chinese Super League have squeezed out Chinese players.

"This shows our situation in China. In China, nearly all the foreign players are forwards," said Lippi, who led his native Italy to the 2006 World Cup title.

"It means for our attack, I have to pick a player who spent the season in central defence."

China's attacking play was far from convincing against Kyrgyzstan, who led at half-time and should have grabbed at least a draw if not for a bungling own goal by their goalkeeper.

But Lippi's team had problems in defence too as they were continually picked apart by an inventive Kyrgyzstan, who dominated the first half and had

chances for a late equaliser.

The news did not improve for China as the influential Wu, reportedly linked with Premier League outfit Wolverhampton Wanderers last year, was left in doubt for Friday's second Group C clash against the Philippines.

"I really hope not," said Lippi, when asked if the injury was serious. "I hope he'll be available (against the Philippines) but it's not certain."

Alexandre Pato, Hulk and Oscar are among the well-paid foreign attacking players in China, where football authorities have tried to clamp down on expensive new arrivals by imposing a heavy tax on transfer fees and a salary cap.

However, Lippi was also a beneficiary of the trend during his time at Guangzhou Evergrande, when the likes of Dario Conca, Elkeson and Muriqui inspired the club to four CSL titles and the 2013 Asian Champions League crown.

Goal-shy China scored just five goals in their six friendlies since September and Lippi revealed he gave his players a half-time rocket after a typically slow start against Kyrgyzstan.

"It's not the first time. In the two-and-a-half years I've been the national team coach, it's happened many times that we've played a negative first half," he said.

"I start to get angry and push my players, and then I get the reaction that I wanted from the first minute. It seems like it's a characteristic of Chinese players!"



## India players use fines to support blind footballers

India players are using money collected in team fines to support blind footballers, the country's federation said yesterday during the Asian Cup. "The footballs which the blind footballers use cost 50 dollars each," manager Stephen Constantine said in a statement. "So we are helping them buy some balls. We collectively agreed among everybody within the national team – the players, and the staff – that any money collected from fines or any misdemeanours will be donated for a good cause. It's just a very small gesture, but it shows that we can." A sum of 50,000 rupees (712 dollars) was donated to the Indian Blind Football Federation. India opened their Asian Cup Group A campaign with a 4-1 win over Thailand on Sunday, their first victory in the competition since 1964. They next play the hosting United Arab Emirates tomorrow in Abu Dhabi.

## Australia's Rogic to be assessed after hand injury

Australia midfielder Tom Rogic is a doubt for the Socceroos' second Asian Cup group game against Palestine on Friday due to a hand injury, assistant coach Rene Meulensteen has said. Australian media reported that Rogic broke a bone in his hand during the defending champions' shock 1-0 defeat by Jordan in their Group B opener on Sunday but the country's football federation (FFA) has yet to confirm the extent of the injury. "We'll have to get the full scale of what we've got to do with that one... when he's got the ultimate results of whether he can keep playing or not," Meulensteen said. Australia are already missing several key players, including midfielders Daniel Arzani and Aaron Mooy, due to injury.

## BOTTOMLINE

## Yoshida wants Japan to fight pressure

AFP  
Abu Dhabi

Japan captain Maya Yoshida has called on his side to cope with pressure to perform at the Asian Cup as they look to make up for their flop four years ago.

The Southampton defender admitted on Tuesday that several of the Japan team were still smarting from their shock penalty shootout loss to United Arab Emirates in the quarter-finals last time out in Australia.

"That was a huge disappointment but this is a new team with a new manager," Yoshida told reporters before the Blue Samurai's opening Group F game against Turkmenistan in Abu Dhabi.

"After the World Cup last year expectation is really high," he added, pointing to Japan's surprise run to the last 16 in Russia, where only a remarkable comeback by Belgium from two goals down prevented them reaching the quarter-finals.

"But unlike the World Cup the expectation on Japan is different at an Asian Cup, where we are expected to win. That brings its own pressure obviously and we need to be able to cope with that and not freeze up."



Japan captain Maya Yoshida (centre) attends a training session on the eve of their AFC Asian Cup match against Turkmenistan in Abu Dhabi yesterday. (AFP)

Japan captured the last of their record four Asian Cups in 2011, but coach Hajime Moriyasu has brought a new-look team to this year's tournament, leaving out the likes of Dortmund playmaker Shinji Kagawa and Leicester striker Shinji Okazaki. Unbeaten in five matches un-

der Moriyasu, the Japanese will rely instead on the mercurial Takumi Minamino and Ritsu Doan. "We've brought in some fresh blood since the World Cup but we have a nice mix of youth and experience," insisted Moriyasu. "It's a chance for the young players to forge their own paths

as Japan internationals."

### 'WE'LL PUSH JAPAN'

Japan will expect to easily advance from a group also including Uzbekistan and Oman, but the Asian Cup has already thrown up its share of upsets, with holders Australia stunned 1-0 by Jordan

in their opening game.

"Australia got beaten, Thailand lost to India and South Korea struggled to win their first game so the first game is hugely important for us," said Yoshida.

"The first order of business will be to make sure we get out of our group. We have to grow into the tournament step by step.

"The new players have a responsibility to build on what previous Japan teams have done and fight with pride to add a new chapter in our history. It's a big tournament for us."

South Korea, who will be boosted by the arrival of Tottenham forward Son Heung-min after their second game, and Iran – 5-0 winners over Yemen on Monday – are the favourites to lift Asian football's most coveted trophy.

"Every opponent will be tough and deserve our utmost respect," said Moriyasu. "We need to be firing at 100% if we want to progress."

Turkmenistan coach Yazyguly Hojageldiyev promised Japan would not have it all their own way. "We know how good Japan are," he said. "We watched them at the World Cup but we are more than motivated to do well and I trust my players to give Japan a close game."

## SELECTION

## Egypt to host 2019 Africa Cup of Nations

AFP

Dakar

Egypt will host the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations between June 15 and July 13, Confederation of African Football (CAF) president Ahmad Ahmad announced in Dakar yesterday.

The CAF executive committee preferred Egypt to South Africa as replacements for original hosts Cameroon, who were dropped due to delays in preparations and concerns over security.

It will be the fifth time Egypt stage the biennial showpiece of African football after 1959, when the country was called the United Arab Republic, 1974, 1986 and 2006.

Egypt only entered the running to host the Cup of Nations when fellow north African country Morocco announced they

would not bid to do so.

Morocco were the hot media favourites to replace Cameroon as hosts and Egypt said they "did not want to compete against a fellow Arab nation".

Egypt boast many international-standard venues with the Cairo International Stadium (72,000) and Borg El Arab Stadium in Alexandria (87,000) boasting the largest capacities.

The choice of Egypt will immediately make them favourites to win a record-extending eighth Cup of Nations this year.

They won three of the four previous tournaments they hosted, failing only in 1974 when they were beaten by Zaïre (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) in the semi-finals.

The star of the current team, Liverpool attacker Mohamed Salah, was favourite to retain the African Player of the Year award in Dakar later yesterday.

FA CUP

# Liverpool knocked out by Wolves

'I am very pleased, the team performed very well...'

Reuters  
London

Premier League leaders Liverpool paid the price for fielding a weakened side as they were knocked out in the third round of the FA Cup following a 2-1 defeat by Wolverhampton Wanderers on Monday.

The Merseysiders fell behind to a Raul Jimenez goal on the break in the 38th minute, the Mexican firing home confidently after Diogo Jota robbed James Milner.

Belgian forward Divock Origi brought Liverpool, seven-times FA Cup winners, level in the 51st minute with a well-placed effort from the edge of the area.

But Wolves grabbed the winner four minutes later when Ruben Neves struck a superb low drive from 30 yards out.

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp fielded a much-changed line-up, including two teenage debutants in midfielder Curtis Jones and full-back Rafael Camacho.

The line-up was further weakened in the sixth minute when central defender Dejan Lovren had to go off with a hamstring injury and was replaced by 16-year-old Dutchman Ki-Jana Hoeser.

Clearly disappointed with Lovren's injury, especially given he has two other central defenders Joe Gomez and Joel Matip currently sidelined, Klopp said: "I am not sure what you all would have said if immediately from the beginning if our centre-half situation was Fabinho and Ki-Jana; then probably a few very smart people would tell me that I don't respect the competition or whatever."

Xherdan Shaqiri went close to an equaliser for Liverpool in the 69th minute but his curling free-kick was pushed on to the post superbly by Wolves keeper John Ruddy.

A minute later Klopp brought on Rob-



Wolverhampton Wanderers' Ruben Neves celebrates after scoring the winner against Liverpool during their FA Cup match in Wolverhampton on Monday. (Reuters)

erto Firmino and Mohamed Salah but Wolves were able to hold firm and maintain their lead.

The reward for Wolves is a fourth round tie against the winner of the replay between Shrewsbury Town and Stoke City.

Wolves' Portuguese manager Nuno Espirito Santo was delighted with the way his team, ninth in the Premier League, had handled Liverpool. "I am very pleased, the team performed very well in a tough game. We took our chances," he said.

SPOTLIGHT

## Pep defends Man City's youth record following Diaz departure

Reuters  
London

Manchester City coach Pep Guardiola has defended his side's youth development record after academy graduate Brahim Diaz left for Real Madrid, saying he only wants to work with players who are committed to the club.

The 19-year-old Diaz completed a move to the Spanish capital on Monday, following in the footsteps of English winger Jadon Sancho, who left City in 2017 for Borussia Dortmund to make a huge impact in the German Bundesliga.

City failed to keep both players at the Etihad Stadium due to a lack of first-team opportunities but Guardiola said youngsters must be patient if they are to make a breakthrough at any of the Europe's elite clubs.

"They win the opportunity (to play) on the field but you have to take a look at all the big clubs in Europe how many young players are in the first team," Guardiola told a news conference ahead of City's League Cup semi-final first-leg against Burton Albion today.

"The young players need time. David Silva, for example, was loaned to others before he be-

came what he is right now, before he came us. Some have patience, some trust what the club want to do, and some don't."

England under-21 playmaker Phil Foden committed his long-term future to City last month, having received a public backing from Guardiola this season.

"Like I said many times, I don't want people that don't want to stay here," the Spanish coach added.

"We did with Brahim everything we have done with Phil (Foden) and with Jadon - important players and we did absolutely everything. The only one who decides to stay is Phil."

Foden is set to feature against Burton with Guardiola having almost his full squad available to cope with the demands of the Premier League and domestic cup competitions this month.

Guardiola said French full back Benjamin Mendy, who is on the sidelines with a knee injury, could return to first-team action in two-to-three weeks.

"He's training alone," Guardiola added. "Two weeks, three weeks maybe (until he returns). Everybody else is fit."

City will return to league action against Wolverhampton Wanderers on Monday as they continue to chase Liverpool, who are four points clear at the top of the table.



In this November 1, 2018, picture, Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola (left) with Brahim Diaz in Manchester, England. (Reuters)

### Barca snap up budding French defender Todibo

Barcelona will sign promising French centre-back Jean-Clair Todibo on a free transfer from French top flight outfit Toulouse this summer, the Spanish club announced yesterday. The 19-year-old who models himself on Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian centre-half Thiago Silva will move to Barca on July 1. He only made his first-team debut in August and has played 10 times in Ligue 1 this season. Born in French Guyana Todibo has also played for the French under-20 side twice. Todibo joins fellow French defenders Samuel Umtiti and Clement Lenglet at Barcelona. Central defence, however, has proven a problem area for the club this season, with Umtiti and Thomas Vermaelen both out injured. According to Barcelona's statement, Todibo is "a tall, right-footed defender, who can play at centre back and also in the centre of the midfield."

### Nigeria coach seeks Victor Moses return

Victor Moses would be welcomed back into Nigeria national team, especially if he played more regular club football, coach Gernot Rohr said yesterday. The 28-year-old was a crucial part of Chelsea's 2017 Premier League-winning side and in 2013 won both the Europa League for his club and the Africa Cup of Nations for his homeland. But the winger quit the Super Eagles aged just 27 after the Russia-hosted World Cup where defeats by Croatia and Argentina dumped Nigeria out in the first round. Moses said he wished to concentrate on his club career and his young family. Rohr said Moses had always acquitted himself well for his country and had announced his retirement too early. "We have to respect his decision. If he changes his mind we will welcome him back," said Rohr. "But he has to find that motivation within himself to come back and be ready to give his 100 per cent at all times, as we know he can."



### Manchester United to open 'experience centres' in China

Manchester United announced yesterday they are opening a series of "entertainment and experience centres" in China as they seek to capitalise on a huge fanbase in the world's most populous country. The first centres, developed in partnership with Chinese property developer Harves, are scheduled to open in Beijing, Shanghai and Shenyang by the end of 2020. Arsenal last year opened a club-themed sports bar and restaurant in Shanghai and French side Paris Saint-Germain also have a hub in the same city, equipped with indoor football pitches and a bar. Each venue at the Manchester United centres will feature "interactive and immersive experiences" and will include restaurants and a club store, the Premier League club said in a statement. United said last year they had more than 107mn followers in China, describing the country as one of the club's most important markets. The 20-time English champions built an enormous global fanbase during the 1990s and 2000s, a period in which they dominated the Premier League.

### Portuguese defender Pepe returns to Porto

Veteran Portugal defender Pepe has returned to Porto after signing a two-and-a-half year deal, the Portuguese champions said yesterday. Pepe, 35, spent three seasons at Porto from 2004-07, winning two league titles before a 30 million-euro (\$34.3mn) move to Real Madrid, where he spent the next decade, winning three La Liga crowns and lifting the Champions League trophy three times. The rugged defender, who will be reunited at Porto with former Real Madrid teammate Iker Casillas, joined Besiktas in 2017 but rescinded his contract with the Turkish club last month. Porto are six points clear at the top of the Portuguese top flight.

### FA opens investigation into Hennessey's alleged Nazi salute

The English Football Association (FA) is looking into an alleged Nazi salute made by Crystal Palace keeper Wayne Hennessey in a group photo with teammates. Wales international Hennessey was pictured with his right arm in the air in a photo posted on Instagram by Palace's German midfielder Max Meyer. The 31-year-old has denied making such a salute, claiming on Twitter that he was calling out the person taking the photograph. "It's been brought to my attention that frozen in a moment by the camera this looks like I am making a completely inappropriate type of salute," Hennessey said. "I can assure everyone I would never ever do that and any resemblance to that kind of gesture is absolutely coincidental. Love and peace Wayne." The FA said it is aware of the incident and is now making enquiries.

FOCUS

## Pochettino wants to be at Spurs for '20 years'

Reuters  
London

Tottenham Hotspur manager Mauricio Pochettino has said he wants to stay at the Premier League club for 20 years and maybe finish his career in north London, the BBC has reported.

Since joining from Southampton in 2014 the 46-year-old Argentine, touted as a future Real Madrid or Manchester United boss by Spanish and British media, has made Spurs a top-four side who regularly compete in the Champions League.

"I hope, or I wish, to be here 20 years and decide to leave or to finish my career here," Pochettino was quoted as saying. "I am so focused here, and want to help the club to achieve what the club want to be in history."

He added: "It would be fantastic. I am so happy to be here. I am so happy to work in that pressure. Why not?"

Pochettino hopes to emulate the longevity of former Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger, who was in charge at Tottenham's London rivals for 22 years before leaving at the end of last season.

"But I don't know because I need to ask (Wenger) one day, if I have the possibility, if he is so happy in the way that he finished," he said. "What I saw from my point of view, it was so unfair how the people treated him."

Pochettino has yet to win a trophy at Spurs but they are still in four competitions this season having reached the Champions League last 16, the League Cup semi-finals - where they host Chelsea on Tuesday - and the FA Cup fourth round. They are in third place in the league.

BOTTOMLINE

## Senior German FA delegation discuss co-operation with AZF

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

Aspire Zone Foundation (AZF) welcomed a senior delegation from the German Football Association (DFB) yesterday to discuss areas of co-operation between the two giant sporting organisations.

The visiting delegation comprised various senior members of the DFB including Oliver Bierhoff, General Manager of Germany's national team and member of the Presidential Board of DFB; Nicklas Dietrich, Fitness Coach of Germany's national team; Thomas Beheshti, Head of Team Management; and Carl Monteiro, Head of Sales and Digital Marketing.

Ahead of the DFB establishing a new sports academy in Frankfurt, they visited Qatar to explore co-operation opportunities with AZF, which has established itself in the past decade as one of the reference organisations in sports worldwide.

The senior sports delegation commenced their visit with an introductory meeting with senior AZF officials including Abdullah Nasser al-Naemi Director General, Aspire Logistics - Member AZF Organisation; Mohamed Mubarak al-Kuwari, Chief Marketing Of-



Abdullah al-Khater (right), Director of Events and Venues at AZF, gives Oliver Bierhoff, General Manager of Germany's national team, a tour of Khalifa International Stadium.

ficer at AZF; and representatives of AZF's Business Development Department.

The German and Qatari parties also discussed steps to further develop their co-operation and will hold another round of meetings today.

The guests also received a detailed briefing at Aspetar, the orthopaedic and sports medicine hospital. They were then given a guided tour by Dr Abdulaziz al-Kuwari, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Aspetar; and Dr Hakim Chalabi, Assistant Director Gen-

eral for International Medical Affairs.

The delegation also had the opportunity to visit the various departments of Aspetar, the accredited FIFA Medical Centre of Excellence, including Sports Medicine, Sports Science, Orthopaedic Surgery, Medical Imaging, Rehabilitation and Dentistry departments.

Their third stop was a visit to Aspire Academy and Professor Valter Di Salvo, Director of Football Performance and Science, who gave the delegation a sneak peek at the Academy's new Football Performance Centre that centralises football performance, science and training methodology to support the development of elite football in Qatar. The beneficiaries of the centre include athletes at Aspire Academy, as well as those playing in the Qatar Stars League and the Qatar National Team.

The delegation ended the tour by visiting Khalifa International Stadium, the first 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar ready venue. Abdullah Aman al-Khater, Director of Events and Venues at AZF, gave the visitors an overview of the innovative and advanced systems and technologies being implemented there to ensure an amazing tournament in 2022.

FOCUS

# Kerber through as Stephens avoids shock loss

AFP  
Sydney

Defending champion Angelique Kerber cruised into the Sydney International third round yesterday as she targets back-to-back titles, while world number five Sloane Stephens narrowly avoided a shock loss.

The second seeded German was made to work hard in the opening set against Italy's Camila Giorgi, but took control in the second to ease through 7-6 (7/3), 6-2.

"It's always tough to play Camila, the way she is hitting the ball. Her second serve is like her first serve," said world number two Kerber, who had a first round bye and is now into the third round.

"It's never easy to play your first tournament match but I am happy to be through. Hopefully I can go back-to-back, but there's still a long way to go."

America's Stephens battled back from the brink of a defeat to beat 72nd-ranked qualifier Ekaterina Alexandrova in their first round clash.

Less than a week before the Australian Open – the season's first Grand Slam – she was on the ropes with Al-

exandrova winning the first set to love and serving for the match in the second set.

But Stephens somehow rallied to win 0-6, 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/3).

"I was, like, it's not going to get any worse than this," Stephens said of the first set. "So it was like I might as well just play."

"Obviously she was playing well. Sometimes when you play a player that's just playing like that, there is not much you can do."

Earlier, two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova avenged her US Open defeat to in-form Aryna Sabalenka.

The Czech, who slumped to 29 in the world after being attacked in her home by a knife-wielding man in 2016, has battled back to number eight and was encouraged by her 6-1, 7-5 win over the Belarusian.

Sabalenka is a form player, racing to number 11 in the world after a stellar 2018 and starting the year by winning the Shenzhen Open.

"She was definitely (finishing strongly). She came from Shenzhen (last week) where she won the tournament so I knew it would be a tough match," said Kvitova.

"Unfortunately I lost (to her) at the US Open but I'm happy with my per-

formance here in the first round."

Kvitova, who is aiming for her second Sydney title after lifting the trophy in 2015, belted 28 winners to Sabalenka's 11 and won an incredible 85% of her first-serve points.

There was no such joy for 2017 French Open winner Jelena Ostapenko, whose poor form continued in a 6-3, 6-3 defeat to Australia's Ash Barty, who is rewarded with a second-round clash against world number one Simona Halep.

After picking up a thigh injury at the Hopman Cup, Garbine Muguruza – another major winner – safely negotiated her first-round encounter with fellow Spaniard Carla Suarez Navarro 6-3, 6-4.

She later pulled out of the tournament, citing an unspecified illness, giving her next opponent Kiki Bertens a walkover into the third round.

Last year Muguruza was the top seed and world number two, but 12 months on she is unseeded and down to 18.

In the men's draw Australian teenager Alex De Minaur, a finalist last year, continued his preparations for the Australian Open with a 6-4 6-3 win over Dusan Lajovic.

Towering Americans Sam Querrey and Reilly Opelka are also through to the next round.



Angelique Kerber from Germany plays a shot to Camila Giorgi from Italy during their second round match at the Sydney International tennis tournament in Sydney yesterday. (AFP)

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

# The greatest? Serena can end Court argument

'It's a little bit sad that amateur tennis of those years is a little bit underestimated'

AFP  
Melbourne

Serena Williams hopes to match Margaret Court's record of 24 singles majors at next week's Australian Open but many already regard her as the greatest women's player of all time – though Court herself is not necessarily among them.

Over the years, Court has expressed admiration for Serena's achievements but the Australian also bristles when her own record is dismissed as largely irrelevant in the world of modern tennis. The 76-year-old won 13 of her 24 Grand Slams before 1968, when the women's game entered the Open era and became fully professional.

Court won 24 singles Grand Slams from 1960-73 – 11 Australian Opens, five French Opens, three Wimbledon and five US Opens. Serena's tally stands at 23 since 1998 – seven Australian Opens, three French Opens, seven Wimbledon and six US Opens.

Chris Evert, who won 18 singles Slams, believes the standard of today's game is so far above previous eras that comparisons are meaningless.

"Of course Serena is the best ever," she told CBS last year.

"A case can be made (for others), but it's really ridiculous. We were the best in our era. Serena is the best in her era."

For former Wimbledon champion Richard Krajicek, Court isn't even in the conversation when it comes to the greatest of all time.

He regards Steffi Graf, with 22 Open-era singles majors, as Serena's only serious rival, pointing out that in 1988 the German won all four Slams and Olympic gold in a calendar year.

"Not to take anything away from Margaret Court, but Steffi Graf was the big record she beat... In amounts Serena is better, but in that one special year Graf has something maybe more special, but both are great champions," he said. "Margaret Court is nice but for me... it's Steffi. I don't know who's one or two, but those two are the two big legends for me."

Court won all four Grand Slams in a calendar year in 1970 but it was still not enough for Krajicek to rank her alongside the greats of the modern



Serena Williams of the US (right) leaves after a training session with her coach Patrick Mouratoglou in Melbourne yesterday. (AFP)

era. The Dutchman pointed out that 11 of Court's titles were earned in Australia at a time when the journey Down Under involved an arduous boat trip that many top players declined to make. Other detractors point out that some of the Slams Court won involved only 32 competitors, rather than the 128-player draws Serena has faced throughout her career. Court vigorously defends her record, disputing the argument that the best players never came to Australia and pointing out her career extended well into the Open era.

"It's a little bit sad that amateur tennis of those years is a little bit underestimated," she said. "They can't forget that I won 11 Slam titles in the Open era."

"I see that there are many awards for Rod Laver and Ken Rosewall, while for the women's tennis they want to speak only about the players who played in the Open era." She also contends that Sere-



Margaret Court

na's serve would not have been as powerful using the wooden rackets of her era, saying the American can look "a little wobbly" without her major weapon. "It's not easy to win Grand Slams, it's probably easier today than

when we were playing," she told the BBC. "We had wooden rackets, we had to travel 10 months of the year, we played every week, we couldn't take family with us, we couldn't take any masseurs, we didn't know any of that, we played with injuries."

Court's haul of 24 titles has been in Serena's sights since the American's last victory at Melbourne Park in 2017 – when she was eight weeks pregnant – and it appears inevitable the 37-year-old will reach the milestone at some point. Court says she doesn't worry about the prospect and can always take comfort from the fact that she has 40 Grand Slam doubles titles to go with her singles crowns.

"I think that no player will be able to beat my record of 64 Grand Slam titles in total," she said. "But if someone will win more than 24 in singles, well, she'll deserve it."

## This century's Australian Open women's champs

- 2018—Caroline Wozniacki (DEN)
- 2017—Serena Williams (USA)
- 2016—Angelique Kerber (GER)
- 2015—Serena Williams (USA)
- 2014—Li Na (CHN)
- 2013—Victoria Azarenka (BLR)
- 2012—Victoria Azarenka (BLR)
- 2011—Kim Clijsters (BEL)
- 2010—Serena Williams (USA)
- 2009—Serena Williams (USA)
- 2008—Maria Sharapova (RUS)
- 2007—Serena Williams (USA)
- 2006—Amelie Mauresmo (FRA)
- 2005—Serena Williams (USA)
- 2004—Justine Henin (BEL)
- 2003—Serena Williams (USA)
- 2002—Jennifer Capriati (USA)
- 2001—Jennifer Capriati (USA)
- 2000—Lindsay Davenport (USA)

SPOTLIGHT

# Nadal says 'no pain' after Sydney tie

AFP  
Sydney

Injury-plagued world number two Rafael Nadal insists he is healthy and in no pain after coming through an exhibition game in Sydney, just days after pulling out of the Brisbane International.

The Spaniard teamed up with Canadian Milos Raonic to defeat Australians Nick Kyrgios and John Millman in the FAST4 Showdown on Monday evening – a shortened, quicker format of the game often described as the tennis equivalent of Twenty20 cricket.

Nadal said that he was "feeling better" after withdrawing from Brisbane, when an MRI revealed a slight strain of his left thigh, casting doubts over his fitness for next week's Australian Open.

"I did not feel the pain here," the 17-time Grand Slam champion said.

"I think it was a good start for me, a good comeback to the action in front of a fantastic crowd in Sydney."

"I really enjoyed playing here. I'm happy to be back on court and happy that I'm healthy again."

Nadal has not played a main tour event since a knee problem forced him to retire during his US Open semi-final against Juan Martin del Potro in September.

The 32-year-old had surgery on his ankle in November to remove a loose intra-articular body and only resumed training a month ago.

He played the opening round at an exhibition event in Abu Dhabi to start his season, where he lost to South African Kevin Anderson, and had a first round bye in Brisbane before withdrawing ahead of the second round.

Asked by reporters if he considered himself a genuine title contender in Melbourne despite his injury problems, he replied: "Why not?"

"You can't predict that. Of course it would be better if I had the chance to play a full tournament in Abu Dhabi and a full tournament in Brisbane, but the big importance is I am feeling good with the ball," he said.

"The only thing is that I didn't play matches since a long time ago."

Nadal will now head to Melbourne, where he was the champion in 2009, to get in as much practice as possible before the opening Grand Slam of the year begins on Monday.

## Tomic warms up for Kyrgios clash, Slam with season-opening win

Bernard Tomic won his first competitive outing of the season yesterday, beating American Jack Sock in a pre-Australian Open tune-up that will also see him take on fellow live-wire Australian Nick Kyrgios. In the opening match of the Kooyong Classic in Melbourne, 83rd-ranked Tomic – who bounced back after on-and-off court issues to win his first ATP title since 2015 at Chengdu in September – overcame Sock in three tight sets.

After beating Sock 5-7, 6-4, 10-6, Tomic is looking ahead to his clash today against Kyrgios, who has also been struggling with form and motivation. The pair have never played on the ATP Tour. "Nick and I have played many many times in practice, we're good friends. This will be our last opportunity to practise because in five days it's the Australian Open," Tomic said after putting in what he termed a decent performance against

the 106th-ranked Sock. The formerly troubled Tomic, who failed to qualify a year ago for the Open when he was ranked 142nd and apparently fed up with tennis, now seems to have settled down. The same may not apply to Kyrgios, who finished his season in October through an elbow injury. He has spent recent months at home in Canberra, playing basketball and doing charity work while speaking with mental health professionals in hopes of

regaining the competitive spirit which once took him to 13th in the world. On Monday, he played in a Fast4 exhibition event in Sydney along with Rafael Nadal. "I'm looking forward to playing Nick, for practice it's unbelievable. I've had some stuff I've had to work on during the last couple of weeks," Tomic said. "Tomorrow's my last chance to do that – hopefully Nick will take it (match) seriously." Sock, who was ranked eighth in the world last January prior to

a collapse in form, lost to Tomic on a drop shot gone wrong. "I landed 24 hours ago so I didn't have a lot of expectations," he said. "It's the first outdoor match for me in a long time. "Off-season I was indoors. Last season's singles was absolutely terrible, in doubles I had some fun. "But that's 2018, it's 2019 now. I'm not stressing about it a lot. I know how well I can play and what I can get back to. I don't care what (ranking) number is in front of my name."



NBA

# Late surge lifts Lakers over Mavs, Bucks down Jazz

'I was actually very pleased with our competitive spirit. I thought guys were giving it their all'

AFP  
Los Angeles

Young stars Brandon Ingram and Lonzo Ball answered Los Angeles coach Luke Walton's call for more fire on Monday, leading the Lakers to a 107-97 NBA victory over the Mavericks in Dallas.

Ingram scored 29 points, Ball added 21 and the Lakers erased a 13-point halftime deficit to halt a three-game skid and post just their second victory in seven games since superstar LeBron James suffered a groin injury in a Christmas Day victory over two-time defending champions Golden State.

Walton had called out Ingram and Ball after a disappointing 108-86 loss to the Minnesota Timberwolves on Sunday. Although the Lakers again found themselves in an early hole in Dallas, Walton said he saw more energy from the opening tip off, and when his team played smarter in the second half they were able to turn things around.

"I was actually very pleased with our competitive spirit in that first half," Walton said. "I thought guys were giving it their all."

Walton said he urged his players to "mentally turn it up" in the second half, and they responded by outscoring the Mavericks 32-13 in the third quarter.

"We knew that was our mistakes," Josh Hart said of the halftime deficit. "We had a couple of offensive rebounds that we gave up that should have had, a couple of miscommunications in the first half that we cleaned up in the second half. It was a good mental game for us."

In Milwaukee, the Bucks rallied from a 62-58 halftime deficit to beat the Utah Jazz 114-102.

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 30 points, Malcolm Brogdon added 21 and the Bucks clamped down defensively in the second half to bounce back from a loss to the Toronto Raptors on Saturday.

"The big thing that stands out to me is after (allowing) 62 points in the first half to hold them to 40 in the second," Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer said. "We weren't very happy at halftime with our defense."

"The way we improved and got better in the second half gave us a chance to find a way offensively in the fourth quarter."

Thon Maker scored a season-high 15 points off the bench for the Bucks, who trailed by three going into the fourth quarter.

Maker's dunk knotted the score at 92-92 with 8:51 left to play. Antetokounmpo's driving layup and ensuing foul shot gave Milwaukee a three-point



Dallas Mavericks forward Dwight Powell (left) and Los Angeles Lakers forward Brandon Ingram (right) fight for the rebound during the second quarter of their NBA game at the American Airlines Center. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

lead and they wouldn't trail again.

## IRVING RETURNS WITH WIN

Kyrie Irving returned from injury to lead the Boston Celtics with 17 points in a 116-95 victory over the Brooklyn Nets.

Irving, who missed two games with an eye injury, led eight Celtics players in double figures with Jayson Tatum adding 16 points and Al Horford, Gordon Hayward, Marcus Morris and Marcus Smart all chipping in 12 as Boston notched a third straight win.

Boston's top scorer Irving hadn't played since both of his eyes were injured in a clash with Marco Belinelli in a New Year's Eve game against San Antonio.

Up by 11 at halftime, the Celtics saw that lead dwindle to five points early in the third, but they regained their offensive rhythm to rebuild the advantage.

## RESULTS

Lakers	107-97	Dallas
Boston	116-95	Brooklyn
Houston	125-113	Denver
Milwaukee	114-102	Utah
New Orleans	114-95	Memphis
San Antonio	119-107	Detroit
Portland	111-101	New York
Sacramento	111-95	Orlando

"Thirty-seven assists tonight, it's fun when we play like that," Hayward said.

San Antonio's longtime coach Gregg Popovich tied Jerry Sloan for third place on the NBA's all-time coaching wins list with the Spurs' 119-107 victory over the Pistons in Detroit.

DeMar DeRozan scored 26 points with nine assists and seven rebounds as the Spurs notched a fifth straight win and their 13th in 16 games.

Popovich now has 1,221 coaching victories, tied with Sloan and trailing only Don Nelson and Lenny Wilkens.

In New Orleans, Anthony Davis scored 36 points, grabbed 13 rebounds and blocked three shots as the New Orleans Pelicans downed the struggling Memphis Grizzlies 114-95.

It was another big night from reigning NBA Most Valuable Player James Harden, who scored 32 points and dished out 14 assists in the Houston Rockets' 125-113 victory over Western Conference leaders Denver.

Clint Capela added a career-high 31 points for the Rockets, who stretched their home winning streak to 10 games.

SPOTLIGHT

## Wolves guard Rose sorry after 'kill yourself' remark

AFP  
New York

Former NBA Most Valuable Player Derrick Rose apologised on Monday for telling anyone who doubted his ability to "kill yourself" for thinking he wouldn't keep playing well for the Minnesota Timberwolves. The 30-year-old guard, who took the 2011 MVP award while with Chicago, was answering a question about how he would fare in the wake of the team firing coach and president Tom Thibodeau on Sunday.

"I have a lot of confidence in myself," Rose said. "Thibs was just the coach that believed in me. I mean, he jump-started my career again and for that I'll always be thankful."

"But everybody that thinks that it's going to stop, kill yourself. It's just not."

Rose later tweeted an apology, insisting he didn't truly suggest suicide or having people harm themselves.

"I messed up by using the slang term 'kill yourself' today in response to a question about whether I can continue to perform without coach Thibs," Rose tweeted. "I did not mean it literally and regret using it so I apologize."

Rose, who played under Thibodeau with Chicago as well as the Timberwolves, was a three-time All-Star with the Bulls but multiple knee surgeries dimmed his glow before a return to form this season.

Rose has averaged 18.9 points and 4.8 assists a game for Minnesota while connect-

ing on a career-high 46.2 percent of his 3-point shots.

The Timberwolves are 19-21, 11th in the Western Conference and two games behind the Los Angeles Lakers for the final West playoff berth.

## ROCKETS TRADE CARTER-WILLIAMS TO BULLS

The Houston Rockets have traded former NBA Rookie of the Year Michael Carter-Williams and cash to the Chicago Bulls in a salary cap manoeuvre, ESPN reported on Monday. League sources told ESPN that the Bulls are expected to waive the 27-year-old point guard, who signed as a free agent with the Rockets in July. His contract would have become guaranteed on Monday afternoon.

The deal reportedly saves Houston \$2.6 million in luxury tax payments, reducing the team's bill from \$16.3 million to \$13.7 million.

Carter-Williams appeared in 16 games (one start) for the Rockets this season, averaging 4.3 points and 1.3 assists in 9.1 minutes per game.

The No. 11 overall pick in the 2013 NBA Draft by Philadelphia, Carter-Williams averaged 16.7 points, 6.3 assists, 6.2 rebounds and 1.9 steals as the league's 2013-14 Rookie of the Year.

He has also played for Milwaukee, Chicago and Charlotte and has career averages of 11.1 points, 4.7 assists and 4.5 rebounds in 303 games.

ESPN reported the Bulls also plan to waive guard MarShon Brooks, acquired in a deal last week with Memphis.



Former NBA Most Valuable Player Derrick Ros.

FOCUS

# As records fall, has 3-point shooting reached its peak?

DPA  
Washington

Has the NBA's pace-and-space era reached its peak?

On Saturday, the Golden State Warriors and Sacramento Kings combined for a record 41 three-pointers in a 127-123 road win by the defending champions. Warriors superstar Stephen Curry was 10-of-20 from the arc, outduelling Kings guard Buddy Hield of Jamaica, who was 8-of-13.

Overall, the teams combined to shoot 41-of-83 (.494) from outside the arc and 52-of-107 (.486) inside it as they recalled the old American Basketball Association, which spawned the three-point shot. All that was missing was a red, white and blue ball. "That's a heck of a basketball game," Kings coach Dave Joergel said. "I hope it was fun to watch; it was fun to play."

"Just an incredible offensive display by both teams," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said.

The previous mark was 40, set less than a year ago by Minnesota and Cleveland. When it comes to three-pointers, records are being broken every couple of months. On October 29 at Chicago, Warriors guard Klay Thompson broke the record for

three-pointers with 14 - in under three quarters - surpassing Curry and his 13 threes in November 2016. On December 19 against Washington, the Houston Rockets broke the team record for three-pointers with 26. The previous mark had been 25 by Cleveland against Atlanta in March 2017.

"It's right there for you to see, right? Everybody's shooting threes," Kerr said.

Many attribute the league-wide increase to the influence of Curry, the greatest distance shooter in league history. But the explosion can be more directly tied to Rockets general manager Daryl Morey and coach Mike D'Antoni.

Since the 2012-13 campaign, Houston has led the NBA in three-pointers made and attempted in every season but one. And since Morey hired D'Antoni as coach three years ago, those numbers have grown exponentially.

In the 2015-16 season, Golden State led the NBA with 31.6 three-point attempts. Over the last three seasons, Houston has averaged 40.3, 42.3 and 42.7 three-point attempts, setting records each year.

The entire league now comprehends the analytic value of a shot worth 50 percent more than other shots. This season, 26 teams are shooting more three-

pointers per game than the league-high 26.6 the Rockets attempted just six years ago.

"It's fun - it's really fun," Thompson said. "The three ball looks great when you're shooting it well."

But not everyone is excited by the three-point explosion.

"I'd rather play inside the three-point line, but you have to adapt," said Warriors superstar forward Kevin Durant, who attempts five three-pointers per game. "I think a lot of players have adapted their games and changed how they play."

Durant's not the only one. Earlier this season, San Antonio Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said, "There's no beauty in it. It's pretty boring."

Ironically, the Spurs are last in the NBA with 24.4 three-point attempts - and first in three-point percentage at .398.

Durant believes the trend has reached a critical mass.

"I don't see this lasting too much longer," he said. "The volume of threes, the way the game is played - pick-up style - it will seize here in a second. I think a lot of guys are adjusting their game to the times."

"It's fun for the fans and fun for us sometimes, but it's also tough to watch and tough to play against. But that's what we signed up for."



Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry (right) reacts after making a three point basket against the Sacramento Kings in the third quarter of their NBA game at Golden 1 Center. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

NFL

# Broncos interview Bears' Fangio, their final HC candidate

'If he wants to be a head coach one day, we want him to take a job to be a head coach'

AFP  
New York

The Denver Broncos more than likely closed out their interviews with head coaching candidates after reportedly meeting with Chicago Bears defensive coordinator Vic Fangio on Monday.

General manager John Elway brought in Fangio the day after the Bears were eliminated from the NFL playoffs by the Philadelphia Eagles in a hard-fought 16-15 game in which kicker Cody Parkey's 43-yard field goal attempt hit the upright and the crossbar before falling short in the closing seconds.

Fangio met with Elway and other Broncos officials in the morning but, according to the *Chicago Sun-Times*, he was back at Halas Hall at the Bears complex by lunchtime. However, he was scheduled to return to the Mile High City for dinner with Elway on Monday night, according to 9News in Denver.

After Sunday's loss, Bears' All-Pro outside linebacker Khalil Mack gave high marks to Fangio.

"Not speaking too soon - it was an honor for me," Mack said. "Understand where he's been and how long he's been coaching and the guys he's coached. Just seeing the things that he was able to do with the group of guys we had was very impressive. Whatever happens, kudos to him."

The 60-year-old Fangio, the oldest of the five candidates on Elway's short list, just completed his 32nd season on an NFL sideline and his 34th in professional football. He has never been a head coach.

He previously interviewed for jobs as head coach with three other NFL teams - the then-San Diego Chargers in 1997, the San Francisco 49ers in 2015 and the Bears last year. The Miami Dolphins were interested this year but never scheduled an interview, according to the NFL Network.

"If he wants to be a head coach one day, we want him to take a job to be a head coach," Bears safety Adrian Amos told reporters Monday. "Everybody just wishes him well."

Looking for his fourth head coach in six years after firing Vance Joseph a week ago, Elway also has reportedly interviewed former Indianapolis Colts coach Chuck Pagano and Pittsburgh Steelers offensive line coach Mike Munchak (both 58), New England Patriots defensive play-caller Brian Flores (37) and Los Angeles Rams quarterbacks coach Zac Taylor (35). Fangio turned the Bears' defense into



Chicago Bears defensive co-ordinator Vic Fangio.

the NFL's best this season, a unit solidified following the September acquisition of Mack in a trade with the Oakland Raiders.

The Bears led the league in takeaways (36), interceptions (27), lowest passer rating (72.9), three-and-out percentage (26.8), fewest rushing touchdowns (five), fewest rushing yards per game (80.0) and scoring (17.7 points per game). Besides Mack, Fangio's unit included a lot of young talent.

"He's an evil genius," Mack told NFL.com in November. "The guy knows the game in and out and he knows his players, and ultimately, he wants the best for us out there on the field, so he puts us in positions to make plays."

Mack finished with 12 1/2 sacks, 47 total tackles and a career-high six forced fumbles with the Bears, who also have three other Pro Bowl selections on their defense: lineman Akiem

Hicks, cornerback Kyle Fuller and safety Eddie Jackson. Mack, Fuller and Jackson were also first-team All-Pro selections.

"I say this positively: just knowing that he's not getting younger - with him, if he aspires to be a head coach, I would say that his time is now," cornerback Prince Amukamara said of Fangio. "And he's worked hard to put himself in a position to be sought after, as he is."

"Of course, as a defensive group and I'm sure everyone in this organization would love for him to stay and not go and get interviews. But we do understand that this could be something, a goal that he's aspired to achieve. Me personally, I support him. But also, selfishly, I would love for him to stay."

**PACKERS TO HIRE TITANS OC LAFLEUR AS HC**  
After almost a month-long

search, the Green Bay Packers will name Tennessee Titans offensive coordinator Matt LaFleur as their next head coach, according to reports from multiple outlets.

He will become the 15th head coach for Green Bay's storied franchise after being interviewed on Sunday. According to ESPN's Adam Scheffer, the Packers started notifying other candidates who were interviewed to tell them they were out of the running.

The 39-year-old LaFleur, who just completed his first season as offensive coordinator of the Titans under first-year head coach Mike Vrabel, spent 2017 as the Los Angeles Rams wide receivers coach (the Rams finished eighth in the league in rushing, 10th in passing), and was quarterbacks coach for the Atlanta Falcons from 2015-16.

The Titans missed the play-

offs this season after finishing 9-7, and were ranked No 25 in total offense, No 27 in scoring and 29th in passing with quarterback Marcus Mariota, but seventh in the league in rushing.

LaFleur, who is from Mount Pleasant, Mich., made his start in the NFL coaching ranks in 2008 with the Houston Texans, connecting with Kyle Shanahan, now the San Francisco 49ers head coach. He joined Mike and Kyle Shanahan with the Washington Redskins, then worked in Atlanta under Kyle Shanahan.

LaFleur will replace Mike McCarthy, who was fired by Packers president/CEO Mark Murphy on December 2 after Green Bay was stunned by the Arizona Cardinals.

Green Bay interviewed at least 11 candidates, many of whom had offensive backgrounds and previous experience as head coaches.

SPOTLIGHT

## Pittsburgh Steelers fire running backs coach Saxon

Reuters  
New York

What does coaching two different Pro Bowl players in back-to-back seasons, the latter while your best player engages in a season-long holdout, get you?

Fired. That's the case for Pittsburgh Steelers running backs coach James Saxon, who is out after five seasons on the job.

Steelers head coach Mike Tomlin announced the move Monday via a brief statement on the team's website: "I have made the decision to not renew the contract for running backs coach James Saxon. We would like to thank James for his efforts over the past five years, and we wish him the best in his future coaching endeavors."

In Saxon's time with the team, Le'Veon Bell made the Pro Bowl in 2014, '16 and '17. And with Bell engaged in a holdout that lasted the entire season in 2018, backup James Conner finished with 973 yards rushing, 497 yards receiving, 13 total touchdowns ... and a Pro Bowl berth.

The one year a Steelers running back did not make the Pro Bowl with Saxon in charge of the position, 2015, then-32-year-old DeAngelo Williams ran for 907 yards and led the league with 11 rushing touchdowns as Bell played in only six games.

Saxon played eight seasons in the NFL with Kansas City, Miami and Philadelphia from 1988-95. A sixth-round pick by the Chiefs out of San Jose State in 1988, Saxon ran for 533 yards on 145 career carries, catching another 69 balls for 515 yards. He scored five career touchdowns.

According to his Steelers bio, Saxon-coached running backs reached the Pro Bowl 14 times. The list includes Adrian Peterson (Minnesota), Ronnie Brown (Miami), and Priest Holmes and Larry Johnson (Kansas City).

**Smith-Schuster replacing Brown as Pro Bowl WR**

Now the Pro Bowl knows what the Pittsburgh Steelers feel like. Wide receiver Antonio Brown, who missed Pittsburgh's regular-season finale for what was listed as a knee



James Saxon

injury, is also out of the post-season all-star contest for apparently the same reason. The Steelers announced that teammate Juju Smith-Schuster will replace Brown on the roster for the game, set for January 27 in Orlando, Fla.

Smith-Schuster was voted as the Steelers' Most Valuable Player by his teammates after making 111 catches for 1,426 yards and seven touchdowns this season. He ranked fifth in the AFC and 12th in the NFL with 1,439 yards from scrimmage.

Brown was out with a knee injury for the Steelers' Week 17 game against the Cincinnati Bengals, per the injury report. However, it was later revealed that Brown missed the final walkthrough and was benched by head coach Mike Tomlin for missing other meetings and practices leading up to the game.

While the Steelers beat the Bengals 16-13 to finish 9-6-1, they were knocked out of playoff contention when the Baltimore Ravens held off the Cleveland Browns. Last week, NFL Network reported teammates doubted Brown's knee injury claims.

Tomlin, who admitted there was no MRI or X-ray on the knee, said he had no reason to doubt the wide receiver was hurt. He followed that up with a completely different feeling, saying at an end-of-year news conference, "We're talking about our darkest hour. The guy not communicating is a very real element of discussion."

Tomlin denied Brown requested a trade, as CBS Sports reported last week.

"I talked to him prior to the game on Sunday," Tomlin said. "I have not talked to him since then. ... I'm not going to frame any expectation or conversation. I'm having conversations with a lot of people in terms of assessing what transpired. I will certainly talk to him."

Brown led the NFL with 15 touchdown catches this season, and had 104 receptions for 1,297 yards.

Other Steelers scheduled to play in the Pro Bowl are running back James Conner, defensive lineman Cameron Heyward and offensive linemen Maurkice Pouncey, David DeCastro and Alejandro Villanueva.

FOCUS

# Gruden has 'final say' on personnel: Raiders GM

Reuters  
Los Angeles

For anyone who feared the Oakland Raiders' hiring of Mike Mayock to be the general manager would create some sort of power struggle between the new guy and head coach Jon Gruden, Mayock is doing his best to alleviate that fear.

When push comes to shove, the GM is deferring to the coach.

"In all honesty, Jon's got final say, if it ever comes to that, and I've got zero problems with that," Mayock told ESPN's Steve Levy on Monday afternoon at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, Calif.

Mayock was attending the College Football Playoff championship game, scouting perennial NFL pipelines Alabama and Clemson.

"Now, having said that, I think we're going to come to a consensus and I like a little yelling, a

little screaming, a little fighting for what players you believe in," Mayock continued.

"But at the end of the day, I guarantee you, Jon Gruden and I are going to know what a Raider looks like and smells like. I don't think we're going to have any issues."

**In addition to the franchise's own first-round pick, the Raiders will have first-round picks from Chicago and Dallas**

After a brief playing career in the early 1980s, Mayock shifted his focus to the media.

He has never held any sort of NFL management or coaching position, and he has worked as an analyst and draft expert for the NFL Network since 2004.

After shadowing Gruden for parts of the offseason, Mayock was named the replacement for the fired Reggie McKenzie on New Year's Eve.

The Raiders finished the 2018 season with a 4-12 record, collecting a cadre of draft picks along the way.

Oakland had a 39-70 record, including a playoff loss, under McKenzie. He helped orchestrate trades that shipped out former first-round picks and Pro Bowl performers Khalil Mack (Bears) and Amari Cooper (Cowboys) during Gruden's first season back on the sidelines since his "Monday Night Football" run.

In addition to the franchise's own first-round pick, the Raiders will have first-round picks from Chicago and Dallas.

The order of those selections will be determined by playoff results.

The Raiders are slated to begin playing in Las Vegas in 2020, but with their lease at the Oakland Coliseum up following the 2018 season and their new stadium in Sin City not ready until 2020, their home for the 2019 season remains uncertain.



Oakland Raiders coach Jon Gruden.

GOLF/Ryder Cup

# Harrington takes captaincy with some trepidation

‘Having won three majors, I’ve done a lot in my own personal career, but I know taking on the Ryder Cup captaincy is a different thing and a different level’



Padraig Harrington poses with the Ryder Cup and his wife Caroline after being appointed as the European Ryder Cup Captain for The 2020 Ryder Cup, (Reuters)

AFP  
London

Ireland's Padraig Harrington will captain Europe at the 2020 Ryder Cup with pride and some trepidation after being appointed yesterday, less than four months after helping the team to a crushing victory over the United States in Paris.

The three-times major winner had been the clear favourite to succeed Denmark's Thomas Bjorn for the defence at Whistling Straits, Wisconsin, after having served as vice-captain at the last three Ryder Cups.

Harrington, who won back-to-back British Opens in 2007 and 2008 before going on to win his third major at that year's PGA Championship, also played in six successive Ryder Cups from 1999 to 2010, helping Europe to four victories.

"You could look at this as being a natural progression - you move on from player to vice-captain to captain - but it's not something I take on without a certain amount of trepidation," the Irishman told a news conference at the European Tour's headquarters.

"We're going to a new venue, it's an away match, and we're going to have on average three more rookies coming into the team," he added.

## Past European Ryder Cup captains

1979-John Jacobs (ENG) - lost  
1981-John Jacobs (ENG) - lost  
1983-Tony Jacklin (ENG) - lost  
1985-Tony Jacklin (ENG) - won  
1987-Tony Jacklin (ENG) - won  
1989-Tony Jacklin (ENG) - halved (Europe retain trophy as defending champions)  
1991-Bernard Gallacher (SCO) - lost  
1993-Bernard Gallacher (SCO) - lost  
1995-Bernard Gallacher (SCO) - won

1997-Seve Ballesteros (ESP) - won  
1999-Mark James (ENG) - lost  
2002-Sam Torrance (SCO) - won  
2004-Bernhard Langer (GER) - won  
2006-Ian Woosnam (WAL) - won  
2008-Nick Faldo (ENG) - lost  
2010-Colin Montgomerie (SCO) - won  
2012-Jose Maria Olazabal (ESP) - won  
2014-Paul McGinley (IRL) - won  
2016-Darren Clarke (NIR) - lost  
2018-Thomas Bjorn (DEN) - won

## EUROPEAN CONTINUITY

Paul McGinley successfully captained Europe at Gleneagles in 2012, while Darren Clarke lost out on American soil at Hazletine in 2014. McGinley and Clarke were among those in a five-man committee to select the captain for Whistling Straits.

The Irishman became the favourite after England's former world number one Lee Westwood, one of the five European vice-captains in 2018, indicated a preference to do the job in Italy in 2022 when Rome hosts the event.

Management continuity is widely seen as one of the factors in Europe's recent success, the team winning nine of the last 12 biennial contests.

Each new captain is appointed after

having generally worked as a vice-captain, often for more than one event - an approach that contrasts to that of the Americans who often seem to be starting their planning afresh each time.

Harrington did not pretend that his appointment had come as a surprise, given that he is an experienced hand on the Wisconsin course, which hosts the Cup from Sept 25-27 next year. He played the PGA Championships there in 2004, 2010 and 2015 and Chicago, with a sizeable Irish population, is within easy reach.

"I'm the right man for the job at this time," he said.

"But just because it seems to be my turn, it's not something I just walked into... It's something I did think long and hard about," he added.

"You are putting it on the line when you become the Ryder Cup captain. It is a different element to your career. We know a successful captain is great and a losing captain, it's his fault."

The 47-year-old has not won a European Tour title since his Portugal Masters triumph in 2016 but came close at the Czech Masters last August, finishing second in what was his best performance of the season. Bjorn's side put on a ruthless display while outplaying the United States in a 17.5-10.5 victory at Le Golf National in September last year.

SPOTLIGHT

# WADA team returns to Moscow for laboratory info today

AFP  
Montreal

A three-person World Anti-Doping Agency team will arrive in Moscow on Wednesday to obtain laboratory doping test data after Russian authorities missed a deadline to provide the information.

The mission announced Monday comes after WADA's athletes committee last week demanded Russia suffer new sanctions for missing a December 31 deadline to provide data from its drug-tainted Moscow lab. WADA will consider its next step in the long-running saga at a January 14-15 meeting of its compliance committee, but the athletes want Russia found in non-compliance.

"Anything less will be considered a failure by WADA to act on behalf of clean athletes," a statement from the committee said. After a recommendation from the meeting, WADA's executive committee will meet by conference call "in the following days" to decide Russia's athletic fate, according to a WADA statement.

Should WADA executives find Russia non-compliant and the Russians want to dispute the ruling, RUSADA would have 21 days to notify WADA and the matter would go before the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

WADA says analysis of data from the Moscow lab is crucial to building strong cases against doping cheats and potentially exonerating other athletes suspected of being part of a systemic state-sponsored doping operation in Russia.

"We are continuing to act on the basis of the 31 December deadline having been missed, with all the consequences that failure could bring," WADA

president Craig Reedie said.

"This week's mission to Moscow is not only about us following due process and precedent. If the mission is successful in acquiring the data, it will break a long impasse and will potentially lead to many cases being actioned."

In September, WADA conditionally lifted a ban on the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA), paving the way for Russian athletes to return to competition across all sports. But one of the conditions was data access by the end of 2018.

A five-person WADA team went to Russia from December 17-21 but left empty handed after Russian authorities raised issues with the certification of WADA equipment under Russian law. "That issue has since been resolved by the Russian authorities," a WADA statement said.

Compliance review committee chair Jonathan Taylor said a non-compliance declaration is considered a "last resort" and the committee "regularly receives late information from signatories ahead of its meetings, which may or may not demonstrate compliance with the outstanding requirements."

WADA's leadership has been strongly criticised over its decision to lift Russia's suspension before obtaining access to the Moscow lab information.

"It's time for WADA to stop being played by the Russians and immediately declare them non-compliant for failing yet again to meet the deadline," US Anti-Doping Agency chief Travis Tygart said.

The IAAF, world governing body for athletics, said it would maintain Russia's ban. Russian athletics teams were barred from the 2016 Rio Olympics and 2017 World Championships in London.

## EQUESTRIAN COURSE



A four-day National Officials Certification Course-Phase 1 for the showjumping officials and course designers was organised by Qatar Equestrian Federation from January 5-8. PICTURES: Lotfi Garsi

HANDBALL WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

# Joint Korean team in latest reconciliation step

DPA  
Seoul/Berlin

Thursday's opening match of the Handball World Championships in Berlin will see the latest Korean reconciliation effort.

Co-hosts Germany face a joint team from North and South Korea, almost a year after the two nations which are technically still at war formed a joint women's ice hockey team at the Pyeongchang Olympics and also marched together at the opening ceremony there.

A joint table tennis team followed at last year's worlds along with joint teams in several sports at the Asian Games in Jakarta, and now it is the Handballers turn. Acting upon an initiative from the ruling body IHF, the Koreans have formed a team of 16 players from the South and four from the North - four more than the regular 16-player squads of the other teams. South Korea's best result at the worlds is eighth



Players of the Korean handball team and of Oranienburger SC pose for a picture after a test match in Oranienburg near Berlin, northeastern Germany on January 7, 2019. (AFP)

in 1997 but they failed to qualify for the last two editions 2015 and 2017. Players from the North are at the big stage for the first time and little is known about the sport in the country.

The players only met for the first time on December 22 in Berlin and have been training since

then in a city "itself no stranger to the process of unification," according to the IHF.

"More than sport, history in the making," the IHF said.

The atmosphere in the team is "very good" by now, South Korean Handball official Yun Jin Eom has said after an awkward

start. Coach Cho Young Shin said: "We became closer with every evening, every training, every meal, and now we have a friendly connection."

Reaching the second group stage at the tournament in Germany and Denmark would be a success for the team which is

up against the Germans, Serbia, Russia, Brazil and mighty France in the first group stage from which the top three of the four groups advance.

Cho has pledged that at least one North Korean player will see action in every game.

"We had only two weeks but that was enough to see the strengths and weaknesses of each player," the coach said.

Captain Jung Su Young has vowed "we will do our best" but above all still towers the message of reconciliation between the two nations which has also seen summits between South Korean President Moon Jae In and the North's leader Kim Jong Un.

"Our ultimate goal is not the results on court, but to show our unique team spirit to the whole world," said John Yoon, head of international affairs at South Korea's federation.

"Our success will be to touch all Handball fans and allow Handball to show the world the peaceful message from the Korea peninsula."

## DEBATE

# India asks 'Is King Kohli better than Tendulkar?'

Kohli last year became the fastest to reach 10,000 runs in ODIs — beating Tendulkar's record



In this file photo taken on November 9, 2012 Sachin Tendulkar speaks with teammate Virat Kohli during a training session at the Cricket Club of India (CCI) in Mumbai.

AFP  
New Delhi

While Virat Kohli's historic success in Australia has been greeted with jubilation in India, it has also sparked a feverish debate: is he even better than the nation's cricket god Sachin Tendulkar?

Kohli, the world's top-ranked batsman in all three formats of the game, on Monday led India to their first-ever Test series win in Australia, after seven decades of trying.

Already known as "King Kohli" before the tour, there are those who say the Indian captain deserves promotion.

But his Test teammates Hardik Pandya and Lokesh Rahul were mercilessly trolled

on Indian social media after saying on a TV chat show that Kohli was a better batsman than Tendulkar.

The pair were blasted for being "pathetic" and "cringe-worthy" by Twitter users in a mass tirade. While Tendulkar has maintained a god-like status in the Indian public's eye since his retirement in 2013, he never managed to guide India to a Test series win in Australia.

Kohli, 30, was born a year before Tendulkar made his India debut in 1989. He is the run machine of modern cricket with more 19,000 runs in Test, one-day and T20 games. He last year became the fastest to reach 10,000 runs in 50-over internationals — beating Tendulkar's record.

Kohli's biographer Vijay Lokapally said there should not

be a comparison between players of different generations, but hailed Kohli's achievements.

"As a captain he sets an example with his fitness, his batting and his leadership," Lokapally told AFP.

"His batting is absolutely top class. He doesn't need a certificate from anyone. And there is no better person to lead the Indian team in any format."

He added: "As far as comparisons go, I think it's unfair to disregard the efforts of former players like Vijay Hazare or Sunil Gavaskar and compare eras."

"Gavaskar was a star of his times, Tendulkar ruled his era and Kohli is the new generation star. So they are all champions in their own place."

Pandya and Rahul set off hostilities with Tendulkar fans

in their off-the-cuff comments on Indian television aired Sunday.

Tendulkar had been named as the best batsmen by a string of luminaries including Don Bradman, Viv Richards and Sunil Gavaskar, one Twitter user noted in response. "Every true cricket fan knows who is best!"

Few doubt however that Kohli has given the world's number one Test nation an even stronger dominance by completing the 2-1 series win in Australia.

World Cup-winning Kohli rated the triumph his "best achievement" so far, and Indian papers hailed the captain for his "Thunder Down Under".

The *Times of India* newspaper headlined its report "The Reign Men", while the *Hindustan Times* said "This win will

make India invincible", headlining the opinion of their columnist Ian Chappell.

Even Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan congratulated India on their historic achievement.

"Congratulations to Virat Kohli and the Indian cricket team for the first ever win by a subcontinent team in a test series in Australia," the former cricketer wrote on his party's Twitter account.

India coach Ravi Shastri said Kohli's leadership skills had "made all the difference" but sought to shoot down all references to deities.

"This is not a team of gods and demigods, seniors or juniors. This is an Indian cricket team that will readily jump off a cliff to win a match for the country," said Shastri.

## FOCUS

## Tons for Taylor, Nicholls as Black Caps sweep Lanka

AFP  
Nelson

Veteran Ross Taylor and rising star Henry Nicholls both smashed centuries as New Zealand beat Sri Lanka by 115 runs in the third one-day international in Nelson yesterday to complete a 3-0 series whitewash.

Taylor top-scored with 137, and Nicholls was unbeaten on 124 off just 80 balls, lifting the hosts to 364 for four after they lost the toss and were sent in to bat.

It was a record ODI score at Nelson's Saxton Oval, where the average is just 275, and Sri Lanka never looked like reaching the mammoth total.

They were all out for 249 in the 42nd over, throwing away their final four wickets without scoring a run as the series ended with a whimper.

Thisara Perera, who scored a blistering 140 in the second ODI, was again the tourists' stand-out performer, racing to 80 in 63 balls.

With the series already decided, Nicholls and Taylor used the dead rubber to send a message to New Zealand selectors ahead of this year's World Cup.

It was Nicholls' maiden ODI ton and the 27-year-old will hope his strong Test form is finally transferring to the limited overs format.

Taylor's 20th ODI century tightened the 34-year-old's grip on the New Zealand record he already holds for one-day centuries.

"I'm getting old and hopefully I've got a few more left in me," he said.

In his last 11 ODI innings Taylor has scored three centuries and six half centuries.

He came to the crease with New Zealand struggling at 31 for two but combined with skipper Kane Williamson for a 116-run partnership to steady the innings.

When Williamson departed on 55, Taylor and Nicholls plundered the Sri Lanka attack with an aggressive 154-run stand.

Sri Lanka captain Lasith Malinga had ousted openers Martin Guptill and Colin Munro cheaply but was expensive in the long run, leaking 93 runs from his 10 overs.

Sri Lanka's senior bowlers were all wayward, particularly at the death, as the tourists conceded 57 runs in the final three overs.

Sri Lanka made a bright start to the run chase, scoring freely before Tim Southee trapped Dhananjaya de Silva lbw on 36.

The run rate then slowed to a crawl when the tourists

## SCORECARD

New Zealand	
M. Guptill c Mendis b Malinga	2
C. Munro b Malinga	21
K. Williamson c de Silva b Sandakan	137
R. Taylor c de Silva b Malinga	137
H. Nicholls not out	124
J. Neesham not out	12
Extras: (b1, lb5, nb1, w6)	13
<b>Total</b> (for 4 wickets, 50 overs)	364
<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-16 (Guptill), 2-31 (Munro), 3-147 (Williamson), 4-301 (Taylor)	
<b>Bowling:</b> Malinga 10-1-93-3 (1w), Chameera 8-0-55-0, Pradeep 9-1-77-0 (5w, 1nb), Perera 2-0-8-0, Sandakan 10-0-54-1, Shanaka 6-0-36-0, de Silva 5-0-35-0	

Sri Lanka	
N. Dickwella c Ferguson b Neesham	46
D. de Silva lbw Southee	36
K. Perera c Seifert b Ferguson	43
K. Mendis run out (Williamson/Seifert)	0
D. Shanaka lbw Sodhi	2
T. Perera c Guptill b Ferguson	80
M. Gunathilaka b Ferguson	31
P. Chameera c Southee b Ferguson	1
L. Malinga stumped (Seifert/Sodhi)	0
L. Sandakan not out	0
N. Pradeep b Sodhi	0
Extras: (lb4, w7) 10	
<b>Total</b> (all out, 41.4 overs)	249
<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-66 (de Silva), 2-107 (Dickwella), 3-107 (K. Mendis), 4-117 (Shanaka), 5-143 (M. Perera), 6-244 (T. Perera), 7-249 (Chameera), 8-249 (Gunathilaka), 9-249 (Malinga), 10-249 (Pradeep)	
<b>Bowling:</b> Southee 7-0-46-1 (4w), Henry 8-0-62-0 (2w), Ferguson 8-0-40-0 (1w), Neesham 5-0-34-1, Williamson 5-0-24-0, Sodhi 8-4-0-40-3	
<b>Toss:</b> Sri Lanka	
<b>Result:</b> New Zealand win by 115 runs	
<b>Series:</b> New Zealand 3-0	
<b>Umpires:</b> Paul Wilson (AUS), Wayne Knights (NZL)	
<b>TV Umpire:</b> Richard Illingworth (ENG)	
<b>Match Referee:</b> Richie Richardson (WIS)	

lost three wickets for 10 runs

to slump to 117 for four, with Niroshan Dickwella and Kusal Mendis departing within the space of two balls.

Worse was to come after Perera fell to a spectacular one-handed catch from Guptill, triggering a tail-end collapse.

Dushmantha Chameera went with Sri Lanka on 249, only for Danushka Gunathilaka, Malinga and Nuwan Pradeep to all depart without furthering the score.

Sri Lanka, who lost a two-Test series against New Zealand 1-0, wrap up their tour with a one-off Twenty20 match against the Black Caps in Auckland on Friday.



New Zealand captain Kane Williamson is presented with a trophy by NZ Cricket director Diane Puketapu at Saxton Field in Nelson yesterday.

## BOTTOMLINE

## India hails 'Wizards of Oz' after breakthrough win

Reuters  
New Delhi

Virat Kohli and his team adorned the front pages of the leading local newspapers yesterday as cricket-mad India celebrated the end of an agonising 71-year wait for a first Test series victory in Australia.

Frequently dubbed 'poor travellers' due to their struggles abroad in contrast to their strong home form, India's 2-1 victory not only lent legitimacy to their standing atop the Test rankings but also made them the first Asian team to win a Test series in Australia.

The *Times of India* saluted the "Wizards of Oz" on its front page and said on its sports page: "Fittingly, the historic moment came in Sydney where Virat Kohli took over as Indian skipper three years ago."

Writing in the newspaper, VVS



Laxman, who also enjoyed a great deal of success against Australia in his playing days, said man-of-the-series Cheteshwar Pujara was the difference between the two sides after putting up 521

runs from seven innings.

"In Pujara's ability to make a good thing count and tire out the opposition bowling is a massive lesson for youngsters," he wrote.

"The volume of his runs, as

well as the number of hours he spent at the crease, was the difference between the two teams."

In the *Hindustan Times*, former Australia captain Ian Chappell predicted India would "apply a

stranglehold to the number one ranking".

While celebrating the "Sweet Taste of History", the daily also pointed out that India had yet to win a Test series in South Africa and said it was "the next frontier".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also congratulated the team, hailing their "historic cricketing accomplishment".

"Congratulations to the Indian Cricket Team for the hard-fought and richly deserved series victory," he said on Twitter.

Batting great Sachin Tendulkar also praised the team for their resilience and hailed the performances of wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant and left-arm spinner Kuldeep Yadav.

"Has been a wonderful series where the younger and senior players shared responsibilities to achieve something special. @Rishabhant777, who has gone from strength to strength and @imkuldeep18 are definitely ones to watch out for," he Tweeted.

### India rest pace spearhead Bumrah for Australia ODIs, NZ tour

New Delhi: India paceman Jasprit Bumrah will be rested for the one-day series in Australia and subsequent tour of New Zealand after playing a key role in their breakthrough Test series win Down Under, the Indian cricket board (BCCI) said yesterday.

The 25-year-old with an unorthodox sling-arm action was joint highest wicket-taker along with Australia's Nathan Lyon with 21 from the four-match series, which the tourists won 2-1. Bumrah sent down 157.1 overs in hot and demanding conditions, the most by a fast bowler in the series and second only to spinner Lyon's 242.1.

"Keeping in mind the workload of the bowler, it was best felt to give him adequate rest ahead

of the home series against Australia," BCCI acting secretary Amitabh Choudhary said in a statement.

"Mohamed Siraj will replace Bumrah in the squad for the Australia and New Zealand tour."

Led by Bumrah, the Indians easily outbowled Australia in the Test series, prompting home captain Tim Paine to call it "potentially the best pace attack in the world". Beginning on Saturday, India will play three one-dayers in Australia before moving to New Zealand to play five ODIs and three Twenty20 Internationals. Paceman Siddarth Kaul has also been drafted into the squad for the Twenty20 series against New Zealand.