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NBA | Page 5

## Lowly Suns shock Warriors, Lowry shines for Raptors

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# GULF TIMES SPORT

FOOTBALL

## Real reappoint Zidane as coach to replace Solari

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**FOCUS**

## UAE fined for crowd trouble in Asian Cup semi with Qatar

Reuters  
Bengaluru

The United Arab Emirates Football Association was fined \$150,000 and its national team ordered to play a home game behind closed doors after sand-throwing local fans marred an Asian Cup clash against Qatar, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) said yesterday.

Eventual champions Qatar defeated hosts UAE 4-0 in the semi-final of the continental championship on January 29, a game in which forward Almoez Ali was pelted with footwear as he celebrated his team's second goal.

Qatar's last two scorers – captain Hassan al-Haydos and Hamid Ismail – were also the target of missiles at the Mohamed bin Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi.

The AFC said the UAE FA was penalised under a number of articles under its disciplinary code, including liability for spectator conduct

(article 65) and organisation of matches (article 64).

"The AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee has sanctioned the UAE FA with a fine of \$150,000 following the incidents that occurred during their Asian Cup semi-final match against Qatar," Asian soccer's governing body said in a statement.

"In addition, the UAE FA has also been ordered to play one match without spectators... which will come into effect during their next match played on the territory of the UAE during the AFC Asian Cup 2023 (qualifiers)?"

Fans had also jeered throughout the Qatar national anthem with dozens of Emiratis sitting for its duration before standing for the UAE anthem.

The AFC said the UAE FA must settle the fine within 30 days and warned it that any future violations may lead to more severe punishment.

Qatar sealed their first continental title with a stunning 3-1 win over four-times champions Japan in the final.



In this January 29, 2019, picture, Qatar's Almoez Ali (left) celebrates with his teammates after scoring a goal against the United Arab Emirates in their AFC Asian Cup semi-final in Abu Dhabi. (Reuters)

**ATHLETICS**

## IAAF lauds Doha 2019 prep work

Diamond League to cut meetings, disciplines by 2020



(From left) IAAF president Sebastian Coe, Russia Taskforce head Rune Andersen and CEO Jon Ridgeon address a press conference in Doha yesterday. (Below) IAAF vice-president and LOC director-general Dahlan al-Hamad.

By Mikhil Bhat  
Doha

The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) Council expressed confidence in the preparations for the IAAF World Athletics Championship Doha 2019, even as the core principles for a revitalised Diamond League starting 2020 were approved yesterday.

The two-day meeting concluded yesterday in Doha, which will also host the biggest athletics extravaganza in September at the Khalifa International Stadium.

"I think it is going very well," IAAF president Sebastian Coe said at a press conference, when asked about their impression of the preparations for the world championships.

"I think it is a very important moment for our sport and for Qatar. I know that our teams are working very closely alongside the Local Organising Committee. And we have considerable confidence in what we think will be a great world championship."

IAAF vice-president and LOC director-general Dahlan al-Hamad added: "I think it (the feedback) was good. It is really going great. We saw satisfaction from our colleagues in the IAAF, and they are here for the Council meeting, and we will also be giving them a progress report about what is going on in our preparation. Overall we



are satisfied and we are doing good."

The athletics action in Qatar this season will kick off with the Asian Athletics Championship next month, which will be followed by the 2019 Diamond League season opener on May 3, 2019.

This year, the annual series of track and field events will enter its 10th year, and IAAF CEO Jon Ridgeon said it was time to take "what was already a great product, and make it better."

"The idea was to bring together the very best one-day meetings in to a high quality annual international circuit, which gives athletes a compelling and a rewarding reason to compete so that the Diamond League represents

the very best of athletics. Create a more consistent, fast-moving and action packed format for broadcasters, and also provide the fans a really persuasive reason to come back to the sport, week-in week-out," IAAF CEO Jon Ridgeon said.

Under the revamped Diamond League, there will be 12 meetings with one final, as against two final meetings in Zurich and Brussels currently. Also the number of disciplines at each meeting will be reduced from 32 to 24, 12 each for men and women, with the longest distance being 3000m. Also, each meeting will be broadcast globally in a faster-paced 90-minute television event.

"The IAAF Diamond League is the way millions of sports fans engage with athletics on a top level every year. It is a strong circuit that is celebrating its 10th year but we can make it even stronger and more relevant to the world our athletes and our fans live in today," said Coe.

Asked if Doha will be among the 12 meetings, al-Hamad said, "That decision is something that they will take, but I can assure you that Doha is one of the countries that is really doing well for the athletes and the athletics in presenting Diamond League. We hope that Doha would be in the first group. I think we are doing good but it depends on the evaluations and the decision that they will take."

He said the decision on the same is expected soon.

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## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

# Ronaldo carries Juve hopes against Atletico

Diego Simeone's Atletico – second in La Liga – have not conceded a goal for five games

AFP  
Turin, Italy

Juventus's Champions League hopes are hanging on Cristiano Ronaldo pulling off another sensational comeback as the Italians trail 2-0 to defensive specialists Atletico Madrid going into the last 16, second-leg tie in Turin today.

"We didn't expect to lose the first leg 2-0, but anything can happen, and we want to give a great response in our home, in front of our fans," Ronaldo said ahead of the game in the Allianz Stadium. "These are the great nights, the fantastic ones: the Champions League nights," he continued. "The team is confident of playing a great game and I am too. To the fans I say: think positive, let's believe. Get ready to come back!"

The seven-time reigning Italian champions bought Ronaldo last summer from Real Madrid for 100m euros (\$117m) to end their Champions League heartbreak going back 23 years. The 34-year-old's stunning overhead kick for Real in the quarter-finals in Turin last April had dumped Juventus out of the tournament once again.

Expectations are high that he can reproduce his improbable hat-trick which lifted Real Madrid past Wolfsburg in April 2016 with the Spaniards 2-0 down to the Germans after the first leg. Juventus have come from behind in the elite European competition eight times – including in the 1996 quarter-finals against Real Madrid on their way to winning the title. They also lifted the European trophy in 1985, but have finished runners-up five times since their last success, including twice in the past four years.

Ronaldo won five Champions League titles with Manchester United and Real Madrid and has scored a record 121 goals of which 57 have proved decisive. The top scorer in the Champions League for the last six seasons, he has however scored just once in this year's competition, delivering a performance far below expectations in Madrid.

Since the Madrid game he has not scored in the league and has been overtaken as the top Serie A scorer by Samp-



Juventus' Cristiano Ronaldo (left) trains with teammates on the eve of the UEFA Champions League last 16 match against Atletico Madrid in Turin yesterday. (AFP)

doria's Fabio Quagliarella, who has 20 goals to Ronaldo's 19. The problem for Juventus is they need to score at least twice against a team that specialises in defence. Diego Simeone's Atletico – second in La Liga – have not conceded a goal for five games. "Everyone knows that they are a strong team, they defend very well, they don't take a lot of risks and they play on the counter-attack, but we are ready, and we will do every-

thing we can to beat them," said Ronaldo, who has scored 22 goals against Atletico. "The fine details will make the difference, and we want to win and qualify for the quarter-finals."

Former-Wolfsburg manager Dieter Hecking believes Ronaldo can make a difference. "Ronaldo is capable of everything, he can also score three goals again as he did against my Wolfsburg. Of course he can," Hecking said.

"Atletico have the best defence in Europe and an excellent attack: without Ronaldo, who can invent goals in any way, it would be impossible. If I said that Ronaldo is not the strongest player I have ever met, I would lie. I remember that night I told the team that we should not be afraid neither of him nor the Bernabeu, but at 17 minutes we were already 2-0 with a double by CR7, it was monstrous."

Allegri's future at the club he has won 10 trophies with since 2014 will likely hinge on this game. The Juventus coach knows the stakes are high. "I think expectations have been raised far too much and it has become an obsession," said the 51-year-old.

"Since I arrived, the Champions League has always been an objective, but if people say that it's a failure if Juventus go out, that is not right."

## SERIE A

## Insigne grabs a point for Napoli

AFP  
Milan

Lorenzo Insigne netted a late equaliser for Napoli in a frustrating 1-1 stalemate at Sassuolo on Sunday night to leave Carlo Ancelotti's side trailing league leaders Juventus by 18 points as Serie A rivals Inter Milan warmed up for next weekend's derby against AC Milan with a 2-0 win at home to SPAL.

Captain Insigne scored four minutes from time after Domenico Berardi had put midtable Sassuolo into a 52nd minute lead in Modena. Napoli's hopes of a first league title since 1990 have faded as Juventus continued their charge towards an eighth consecutive Scudetto with a 4-1 win over Udinese on Friday.

Napoli are far behind in second, six points ahead of AC Milan, who beat bottom club Chievo 2-1 on Saturday for a fifth league win in a row. Inter Milan are a further point adrift in fourth.

Inter meanwhile shook off pre-derby tensions with Matteo Politano and Roberto Gagliardini scoring in the second half to beat SPAL 2-0 to revive their Champions League chase. Luciano Spalletti's side had taken just a point from their last two games, and desperately needed a morale-boosting win to keep pace with AC Milan before next week's Derby della Madonnina.

Argentina star Mauro Icardi was not present in the San Siro, remaining sidelined since being stripped of the captaincy a month ago amid a contract dispute. The 26-year-old also remains uncertain for Thursday's Europa League game against Eintracht Frankfurt and Sunday's derby, both at the San Siro.

The race for Champions League football remains tight with Roma, Torino and Atalanta six points behind fourth-placed Inter Milan. Lazio, with a game in hand, are two points off the Europa league places after a 1-1 draw at Fiorentina, with Ciro Immobile's 23rd minute goal cancelled out by Luis Muriel (61) for the hosts who are 10th.

Torino continued their impressive form with Andrea Belotti claiming a double to extend their winning run to three games with a 2-1 win at Frosinone.

## SPOTLIGHT

## Man City still teenagers in adult world of Champions League: Guardiola

AFP  
Manchester, United Kingdom

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has again cast doubt on the Premier League champions' readiness to win the Champions League for the first time despite being favourites for the competition. City host Bundesliga strugglers Schalke today with a 3-2 first leg lead in their last 16 tie hoping to avoid the pitfalls that did for Paris Saint-Germain and Real Madrid in Champions League shocks last week.

Guardiola admitted even he was taken aback by Manchester United's stunning 3-1 win in Paris and holders Madrid's capitulation to a talented young Ajax team, but refuted suggestions their elimination had cleared the way for City to finally conquer Europe.

"We are teenagers in this competition that's my feeling. It's not excuses, of course we want to win it," said the Catalan coach. "You have to dream and point as high as possible but in the same time you have to accept there are other teams thinking the same with a lot of quality and lot of talent."

Guardiola was annoyed by City's mistakes in conceding two penalties and having Nicolas Otamendi sent off 22 minutes from time in Gelsenkirchen three weeks ago despite turning around a 2-1 deficit with 10 men through late goals from Leroy Sane and Raheem Sterling.

And he used that experience to warn his players against any complacency. "In domestic competition there is another game, in this competition there is not another game. It is something unique, the focus is incredible and when you make something wrong they (the opponent) punish it," he added.

"Schalke had two shots on



Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola. (Reuters)

target and scored two goals. We played 23 minutes 10 v 11 when we could avoid that second yellow card from Nico. We are lucky today we are here 3-2 up when we could be 3-1 or 4-1 down. That's the reality in this competition. (There is) work to do, be calm and focused."

Along with the suspended Otamendi, Ferdinandinho will

again miss out through injury, but the Brazilian's absence has not been felt as badly as first feared due to Ilkay Gundogan's form. The German has deputised ably in the holding midfield role, but has so far refused to commit his future to City beyond his current contract, which expires in 2020.

Meanwhile, Schalke head

coach Domenico Tedesco is barely hanging onto his job and confidence at rock bottom. The Germans had shrugged off dreadful league form to produce a battling display against City in the first leg. However, Schalke's fortunes have nose-dived since, leaking 11 goals in three heavy defeats to leave them four points from the Bundesliga relegation places. Tedesco, 33, has been told he has two games to prove himself.

Schalke's new sporting director Jochen Schneider says only good performances at City and home to third-placed RB Leipzig next Saturday can save Tedesco. Man City have won their last nine games at the Etihad Stadium, but the Schalke squad are hoping for an unlikely away victory and want Tedesco to stay on.

"Of course we do – no one has ever said anything different," said striker Guido Burgstaller. Despite playing well for 55 minutes at Werder Bremen on Friday, Schalke eventually lost 4-2 with Swiss striker Breel Embolo scoring the visitors' goals.

"No points, no big improvement. Hard times are waiting for us," admitted Austrian Burgstaller glumly, looking ahead to the game in Manchester. "Things won't get easier, we have to be prepared for that."

Morale in the Schalke squad is so low after Friday's defeat that all the talk was on avoiding relegation, with the prospect of facing the Premier League leaders in their own backyard barely registering.

"This is not a pleasure trip," says Schneider. "The anticipation is overshadowed by the situation in the Bundesliga."

Defeat in Bremen came on the back of last weekend's 4-0 thumping at home to Fortuna Dueseldorf and a 3-0 defeat at Mainz – three losses against mediocre mid-table opposition.

## FOCUS

## Tuchel commits to PSG future after Champions League 'accident'

AFP  
Paris

Paris Saint-Germain coach Thomas Tuchel says he has no intention of leaving the French club in the wake of their exit from the Champions League at the hands of Manchester United. "I have a contract and I want to stay here a long time, grow and have success with the club, that is my goal, that's absolutely clear," said the German on Monday when asked how he sees his future.

Tuchel was appointed last year on a two-year deal to succeed Unai Emery. He had been widely praised for his work at the Parc des Princes, but another elimination from the Champions League in the first knockout round has raised questions.

PSG had been desperate to make progress in Europe after being knocked out of the Champions League last 16 in back-to-back seasons under Emery. They looked on course to reach the quarter-finals after a 2-0 win away to United in the first leg last month, but a 3-1 home loss at the Parc des Princes last week knocked them out on away goals.

The nature of their defeat, especially coming two years after their capitulation against Barcelona at the same stage, has seen PSG widely labelled as bottlers, incapable of dealing with the tension on the big stage.

However, Tuchel insists that the United game was "an accident", with the tie decided by Marcus Rashford's penalty, which was awarded for a handball following a controversial VAR review. "It is difficult to analyse Wednesday because in my opinion it was an accident,"



said Tuchel.

"Lots of people might say, 'yes, but there have been lots of accidents at the same moment going back several years', but for me and this team it was an accident, there is no explanation, we controlled the game. We wanted to show that things are different this season, it was the moment to grow, to leave the doubts behind, but we were not capable of taking that step."

PSG returned to training on Sunday after three days off in the wake of the United game.

They were greeted with abuse from supporters who had been invited into the session at the club's stadium. Reports said that attempts by players, including captain Thiago Silva, to calm the 'Ultras' were ignored, with more verbal abuse the response. "They were hurt, sad, angry. Everyone can understand that but you can't be more sad or hurt than us. It's not possi-

ble," Tuchel insisted. After not playing at the weekend, PSG return to action today in a rearranged league fixture at struggling Dijon.

They go into that game without Edinson Cavani, who is not fit, while Julian Draxler is injured, Dani Alves is suspended and January signing Leandro Paredes is not eligible.

With PSG 14 points clear of second-placed Lille, and with two games in hand, the Ligue 1 title is surely in the bag, and Tuchel's biggest challenge now will be motivating his players to keep going until the end of the campaign. Today's game is followed by a home fixture against old rivals Marseille on Sunday.

"Lots of guys here want the season to end and to have a holiday but that is not an option. "It is part of the essence of sport that you have to swallow things that are hard to swallow, and get on with it."

## LA LIGA

# Real Madrid reappoint Zidane as coach to replace Solari

*The Frenchman has been given a contract until June 2022, just nine months after he resigned at the end of last season, having led Madrid to an historic third consecutive Champions League triumph*

AFP  
Madrid

Zinedine Zidane has made a sensational return as coach of Real Madrid after Santiago Solari's sacking was finally confirmed yesterday. Zidane has been given a contract until June 2022, just nine months after he resigned at the end of last season, having led Madrid to an historic third consecutive Champions League triumph. Solari's dismissal was expected after three consecutive home defeats – to Barcelona, twice, and Ajax – deemed Madrid's season all-but over before the middle of March. But Zidane coming back, with only 11 games left in La Liga and almost nothing to play for, is a surprise, particularly after he left on the incredible high of yet another European triumph.

"Real Madrid's board has decided to terminate Santiago Solari's contract as coach of the first team," read an official statement yesterday.

"Real Madrid appreciates the work done by Santiago Solari and the commitment and loyalty he has always shown to this club. The board has also agreed to the appointment of Zinedine Zidane as the new coach of Real Madrid with immediate effect for the remainder of the season and the next three, until June 30, 2022."

Like Solari, Zidane had been in charge of Real Madrid's reserve side, Castilla, when he was promoted in January 2016. Madrid finished second that year before going on to win La Liga in Zidane's first full season in charge. They were unable to repeat the feat last term and finished 17 points behind Barcelona but domestic disappointment was almost forgotten as Zidane again oversaw success in Europe, with a victory over Liverpool in the final in Kiev.

Immensely popular with most of the players, Zidane's appointment will almost certainly lift morale in the dressing room, following a week in which captain Sergio Ramos has reportedly argued with club president Florentino Perez and been involved in a training ground spat with Marcelo.

Gareth Bale was one of the few to suffer during Zidane's previous spell in charge, with the pair barely on speaking terms in the run-up to the Champions League final. Bale's future now appears in serious doubt unless their relationship can be quickly repaired. The Welshman might have left last summer had Zidane stayed but instead it was Cristiano Ronaldo that departed and the Frenchman now takes over a team missing the Portuguese's goals and in urgent need of reform.

Despite Madrid's dominance in the Champions League, there is ground to make up in La Liga, where Barcelona are on course to seal their eighth league title in 11 years. Madrid sit 12 points adrift of Barca in the table despite a 4-1 victory over Real Valladolid on Sunday, which proved to be Solari's final game in charge. Solari was handed a contract until 2021 after overseeing an improvement following the sacking of Julen Lopetegui in November. But familiar problems, including a lack of goals and a leaky defence, resurfaced in February as a defeat at home to Girona was quickly followed by losses to Barcelona in the league and cup, and humiliation by Ajax in the last 16 of the Champions League.

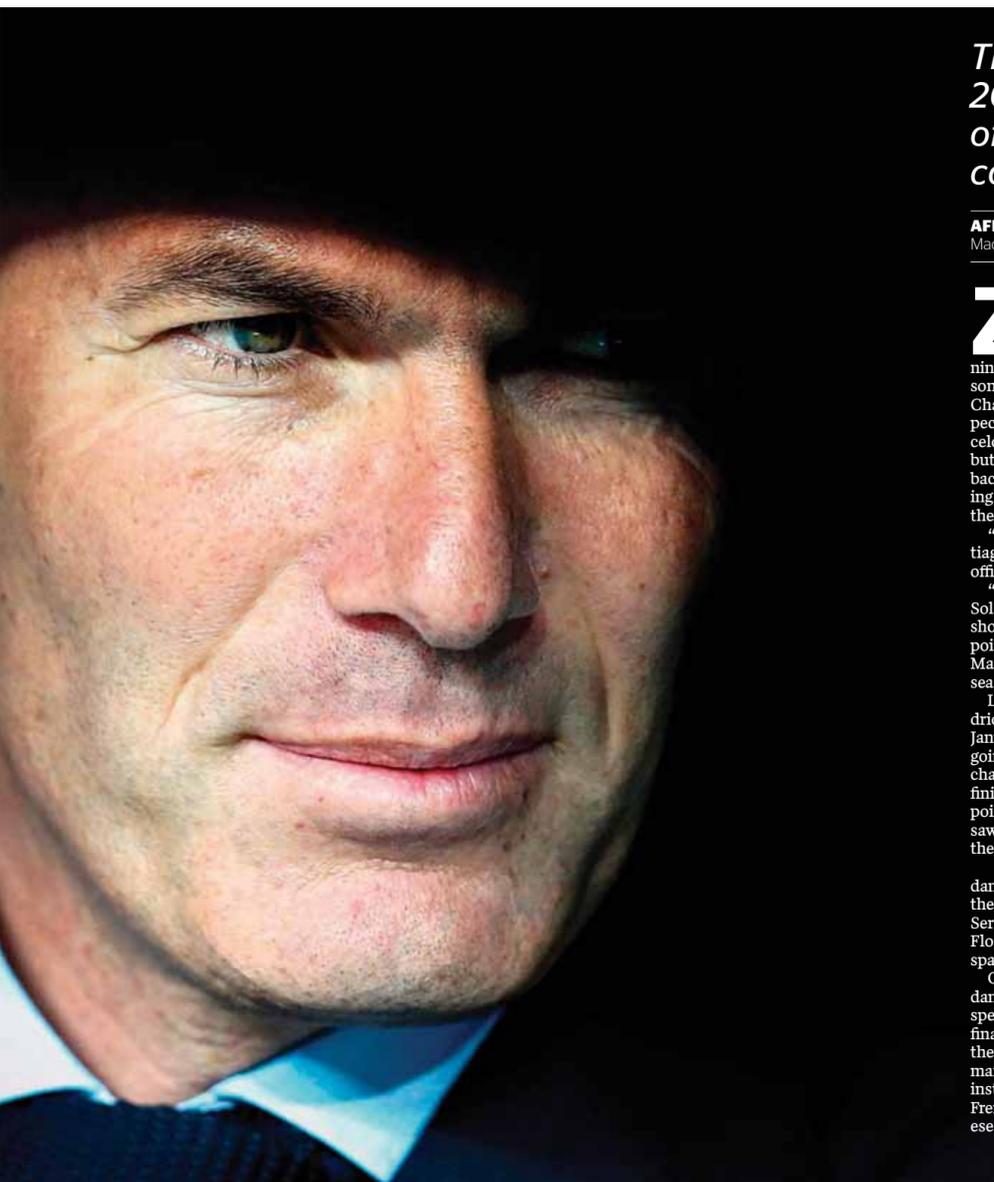
## RAMOS TAKES RESPONSIBILITY FOR REAL MADRID WOES

Earlier yesterday, captain Sergio Ramos says he takes the blame for Real Madrid's "deeply disappointing" season. Ramos posed a series of questions to himself on social media yesterday in the hope that his answers would be "the most honest way" to tackle speculation surrounding the club. "As footballers we like to do our talking on the pitch but this season is not turning out that way," Ramos wrote. "Recent events have been disastrous and I'm not hiding. We are not hiding. We the players are primarily responsible and I, as captain, more than anyone."

Ramos has been at the centre of Madrid's problems in recent weeks. He was suspended for the defeat to Ajax after deliberately picking up a yellow card in the first leg and, sitting in the stands for the return, Madrid's captain was then pictured filming a documentary as his team-mates were beaten 4-1.

"Was the yellow card in Amsterdam an error? Absolutely it was an error and I take the blame 200 per cent," Ramos wrote. "Why did you record the documentary? There are certain commitments made and it never remotely went through my head that the game could have turned out as it did. The recording itself was scaled down as the game went on."

Ramos was reportedly engaged in a heated argument with club president Florentino Perez after the game, in which he countered accusations of unprofessionalism by attributing Madrid's problems to bad planning at the top of the club. "Did you argue with the President in the dressing room? Dressing room issues are discussed and resolved in the dressing room," Ramos wrote. "There's no problem whatsoever and everybody has the same interest: Real Madrid."



## SPOTLIGHT

## Grealish attacker jailed for 14 weeks as fears mount over player safety

AFP  
London

A Birmingham fan who punched Aston Villa's Jack Grealish after invading the pitch was jailed for 14 weeks yesterday as calls mounted for urgent action to prevent potentially life-threatening attacks.

Grealish was attacked by a supporter during the Birmingham derby on Sunday, hours before Manchester United defender Chris Smalling was confronted on the pitch at the Emirates by an Arsenal supporter.

The shocking incidents followed an episode on Friday in which Rangers captain James Tavernier was challenged by a pitch-invading Hibernian fan in his side's stormy Scottish Premiership draw.

Birmingham fan Paul Mitchell, who pleaded guilty to assault and pitch encroachment, blew kisses to supporters at the club's St Andrew's ground as he was led away by stewards following the attack early in the Championship match.

The 27-year-old pub worker, who was handed a 10-year football banning order by Birmingham Magistrates' Court, has also been slapped with a lifetime ban by Birmingham City. Passing sentence, magistrate Alison Fisher told Mitchell: "This type of behaviour is completely unacceptable – a view shared by your own football club. Mr Grealish has stated that he was shocked and scared and feels lucky that it wasn't worse. Players such as Mr Grealish are entitled to protection. We have therefore gone outside of our guidelines in the interests of justice."

In a statement read to magistrates from Grealish, who went on to score the winning goal in Sunday's 1-0 win for Villa, he said: "I cannot help but feel how lucky I was in this incident. 'It could have been so much worse had the supporter had some sort of weapon.'"

Birmingham issued a statement welcoming the sentence, saying Mitchell's actions had "no place in football". "The club can confirm that Mr Mitchell is banned from our home ground, the St. Andrew's Trillion Trophy Stadium, for life," the statement said. "And nor will he have access to purchase tickets for away games involving Bir-



A Birmingham City fan is restrained by a steward after invading the pitch and attacking Aston Villa's Jack Grealish during the Championship match on Sunday. (Reuters)

mingham City Football Club, or have tickets purchased on his behalf."

The club said it had banned another supporter for life "for a series of vile and malicious tweets on social media, relating to Jack Grealish and his family", adding that the individual remained the subject of a police investigation.

Writing in his column in the *Sun* newspaper, former England captain Alan Shearer warned players' lives could be at risk unless there was decisive action. "It is absolutely disgusting and if we don't stamp it out now, next time it could be a knife," he said.

PFA chief executive Gordon Taylor condemned the attack on boyhood Villa fan Grealish. "It was disgraceful, cowardly and criminal. We have seen an increase in such behaviour at clubs this season. It's been racist abuse, it's been anti-Semitism and now it's real fear for the safety of players," Taylor told *Sky Sports News*.

Smalling was confronted by an Arsenal fan following Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's goal for the Gunners in United's

2-0 Premier League defeat at the Emirates Stadium. Smalling tweeted: "Commenting would only add to the attention he craved... Disappointed with yesterday's result but we'll learn from it. Looking ahead. Have a good start to the week everyone!"

A man named as Gary Cooper, 30, has been charged with common assault over the incident at the Emirates, police confirmed. The FA said "a line had been crossed in terms of fan behaviour" and promised to examine security measures at the two matches in question as well as what future steps can be taken.

Rangers manager Steven Gerrard called on fans to take responsibility for their actions after Tavernier became embroiled in a shoving match with a Hibernian fan who jumped out of the stands to kick the ball away. "Fans have to take responsibility and think before they do these type of things, because if it continues someone is going to get hurt and hurt badly, and no one wants it to get to that stage," said the former England player.

## PREMIER LEAGUE

## Arsenal say Lingard antics fuelled revenge mission against Man Utd

AFP  
London

Arsenal goalkeeper Bernd Leno has revealed Jesse Lingard's extravagant goal celebrations at the Gunners' expense inspired their revenge victory over Manchester United. Lingard infuriated Arsenal's players when he launched into a 'moon-walk' in front of the home supporters to mark his goal in United's 3-1 FA Cup fourth-round win at the Emirates Stadium in January.

The United winger's flamboyant celebration was perceived as taunting and Arsenal were determined to get their own back when Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side returned to north London on Sunday. Lingard, who also scored

twice in the league clash at Arsenal last season, irked fans by posting his recent celebration on Instagram with the location set as "dancefloor".

But Granit Xhaka's opener and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's penalty gave Arsenal the 2-0 win they craved at the weekend, ending Solskjaer's unbeaten domestic streak since taking charge at Old Trafford in December. Making it even sweeter, Arsenal climbed above United into fourth place in the race to qualify for next season's Champions League. Arsenal's Mesut Ozil referenced Lingard in a post-match tweet on Sunday which read: "Dancefloor huh? Superb performance! Brilliant result! Thank you Emirates Stadium! Proud to be a Gunner!"

Lingard missed the game as

he nurses a hamstring injury but Leno admitted the England star's antics had spurred on Unai Emery's team. "In your mind you will never forget something like that, when somebody is celebrating," Leno said.

"You don't want to see it again so we were motivated and we knew before the game about our chance because Man United had one more point than us. Now we have a two-point lead and that was enough motivation for us. We are in the top four and the other teams now wait for our mistakes."

"We don't play against the other top six teams so I think we can beat the others," the goalkeeper added. "The next game is against Newcastle at home and it is an opportunity to win and stay in the top four."

## Qatar beat India 1-0 in U-23 friendly



India went down fighting to Qatar 0-1 in a friendly match at the Aspire Zone in Doha yesterday. Amro Abdefatah Surag scored the only goal of the match for the home team in the 40th minute to seal a win. The friendly encounter was part of both team's preparation for the AFC U-23 qualifiers later this month. PICTURE: @IndianFootball twitter account

## SPOTLIGHT

## Pakistan calls for ICC action over India army caps

Reuters  
Mumbai

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has urged the International Cricket Council to take strong action against India after their cricketers wore army camouflage-style caps in a match against Australia on Friday.

Indian cricketers sported olive-and-black caps bearing the cricket board's logo (BCCI) in solidarity with Indian paramilitary police

killed last month in a militant attack by a terrorist group, allegedly based in Pakistan.

The suicide bombing killed 40 in Indian-controlled Kashmir and prompted India to launch an air strike inside Pakistan, which responded with an aerial attack the next day.

PCB Chairman Ehsan Mani told reporters in Karachi late on Sunday they had taken up the matter with the ICC.

"We believe that cricket and sports should not be used for politics and we have

said this very clearly," he said. "Their (India) credibility in the cricketing world has gone down very badly."

The idea to sport the caps came from former Indian captain and current wicketkeeper Mahendra Singh Dhoni – one of the game's biggest names and an honorary lieutenant colonel with the Indian army – who distributed them to the team before the toss.

The BCCI said they had sought permission from the world governing body before Friday's match, Indian media

reported. The reports also said the ICC had confirmed the caps were allowed as part of a charity fundraising effort.

India captain Virat Kohli said all the players would donate their fees from the match to a national defence fund to help out the families of defence personnel who die on duty. Kohli also urged all Indians to contribute to the fund.

Mani said the ICC had in the past acted against England all-rounder Moeen Ali and South Africa leg-spinner

Imran Tahir for breaching ICC clothing and equipment regulations to make political statements.

"The ICC had taken strong action against them and we have sought similar action against India," he added. "The permission they took was for a different purpose but they acted differently."

"We have been in touch with ICC from day one, sent one letter already and another is being followed up in next 12 hours. There should not be any ambiguity as we are taking this very strongly."

## PSL

## Abbas shines in Multan's win over Lahore

Agencies  
Karachi

Fast bowler Mohamed Abbas took three wickets to guide Multan Sultans to a convincing seven-wicket win over Lahore Qalandars in the HBL PSL in Karachi yesterday.

Abbas finished with 3-22 keeping Lahore down to 140-8 in their 20 overs before opener Shan Masood struck 25-ball 48 with eight boundaries and a six to steer Multan to the target in just 12.3 overs.

The win gave Multan fifth position in the points table with six points in ten matches, a finish they also achieved last year while Lahore's fate could not change as they finished fifth and last in the first two editions and sixth and last both this and the preceding year.

Lahore managed just six points in ten matches and had an inferior net run-rate than Multan.

Masood added 50 for the second-wicket with Johnson Charles (25-ball 41 not out with five boundaries and two sixes) to steady the chase after Multan lost Umar Siddiq for 13 at the total of 20.

When Masood got out, Multan needed 18 more which they scored without any hiccup with some 45 balls to spare.

Abbas said he stuck to the basics which brought him success in Tests.

"I was injured and after my rehab I got my chance," said Abbas. "I did my wholehearted effort and stuck to my basics and that gave me success."

Multan skipper Shoaib Malik said his team did not do justice with their talent.

"Overall we played good cricket but luck was not on our side," said Malik. "We lacked that winning ratio in the tournament and did not grab the crunch positions."

Lahore skipper Fakhar Zaman

admitted it was a tough tournament for his team.

"Yes, it was tough and especially when you lose so many matches," said Fakhar. "We did learn and got some good bowlers but the end wasn't ideal."

Lahore were led by opener Fakhar's 36-ball 53 which had eight boundaries and a six but they kept losing wickets and could never get the impetus for a fighting total.

Off-spinner Chris Green, who took 1-25 in his four overs, provided Multan with the breakthrough when he dismissed Rikki Wessels for four before Abbas took over.

Abbas celebrated his inclusion in the Pakistan team for the ODI series against Australia starting next week by dismissing Sohail Akhtar (five), David Wiese (30) and Saad Ali (eight) in an incisive spell of fast bowling.

Crowd favourite Shahid Afridi marked his first-ever presence in a HBL PSL match staged in Pakistan with a spell of two for 18 off his four overs.

In a late match, Kamran Akmal belted 86 off 48 balls as Peshawar Zalmi thrashed Karachi Kings by 61 runs. Akmal figured in a 137-run stand for the opening wicket with Imam-ul-Haq, who made who made 59 of 40 balls as Zalmi reached 203 for 7.

In reply, Karachi Kings found the going tough against Zalmi bowlers Hasan Ali, Sameen Gul and Tymal Mills and were bundled out for 142 despite Colin Ingram's 71 and Imad Wasim's 30.

## BRIEF SCORES

**Multan Sultans** 141 for 3 (Masood 48, Charles 41\*) beat **Lahore Qalandars** 140 for 8 (Fakhar 53, Wiese 30, Abbas 3-22, Afridi 2-18) by seven wickets

**Peshawar Zalmi** 203 for 7 (Kamran 86, Imam 59, Amir 3-24) beat **Karachi Kings** 142 (Ingram 71, Imad 30, Hasan Ali 3-15) by 61 runs

## SECOND TEST

## Taylor's double century raises NZ victory hopes

'The game situation, being a three-day Test, we had to be a bit more proactive'

AFP  
Wellington

A double ton from Ross Taylor and three quick Bangladesh wickets put New Zealand in a prime position to pull off an exceptional victory in the rain-shortened second Test in Wellington.

At stumps on day four at Basin Reserve, where the first two days were washed out, Bangladesh were hurting at 80 for three, still 141 from making New Zealand bat again.

"We didn't play the first two days. If the result goes against us, we will feel bad," Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal said.

Taylor, dropped twice on 20, proceeded to punish the Bangladesh attack with a rollicking 200 from 212 balls before New Zealand declared at 432 for six.

He said he was determined to make the most of his two lives but it took a while to realise 200 was on the cards.

"If you'd told me that at the start of the day, especially how the first 10 overs went, I would have said 'you're kidding,'" he said.

"I thought 'well my luck's got to change sooner or later let's make it pay!'"

"The game situation, being a three-day Test, we had to be a bit more proactive and score quickly and try first of all to get a lead and try to build it up as quick as possible to give our bowlers a bit of a chance."

Bangladesh made a disastrous start to their second innings when Tamim, their lead-



New Zealand batsman Ross Taylor (C) celebrates reaching his century during day four of the second Test match against Bangladesh at the Basin Reserve in Wellington yesterday.

## WELLINGTON SCORECARD

<b>Bangladesh first innings</b> 211 (Tamim Iqbal 74, Liton Das 33; Wagner 4-28, Boult 3-38)	35-0, Taijul 21-0-99-2, Mominul 9-0-41-0
<b>New Zealand first innings</b> (overnight 38-2)	<b>Bangladesh second innings</b>
J. Raval c Soumya b Jayed ..... 3	Tamim Iqbal b Boult ..... 4
T. Latham c Liton Das b Jayed ..... 4	Shadman Islam c Watling b Henry ..... 29
K. Williamson c&b Taijul ..... 74	Mominul Haque c Southee b Boult ..... 10
R. Taylor c Liton Das b Mustafizur ..... 200	M. Mithun not out ..... 25
H. Nicholls b Taijul ..... 107	Soumya Sarkar not out ..... 12
C. de Grandhomme not out ..... 23	<b>Extras:</b> ..... 0
B. Watling c Soumya Sarkar b Jayed ..... 8	<b>Total:</b> (for 3 wickets; 23 overs) ..... 80
<b>Extras:</b> (lb5, w7, nb1) ..... 13	<b>Fall:</b> 1-4 (Tamim), 2-20 (Mominul), 3-55 (Shadman)
<b>Total:</b> (for 6 wickets dec; 84.5 overs) ..... 432	<b>Bowling:</b> Boult 8-1-34-2, Southee 5-1-18-0, Henry 4-2-17-1, de Grandhomme 2-0-3-0, Wagner 4-2-8-0
<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-5 (Latham), 2-8 (Raval), 3-180 (Williamson), 4-396 (Nicholls), 5-421 (Taylor), 6-432 (Watling)	<b>Toss:</b> New Zealand
<b>Bowling:</b> Jayed 18.5-2-94-3, Ebadat 16-2-84-0 (5w), Mustafizur 14-2-74-1 (2w, 1nb), Soumya 6-0-	<b>Series:</b> New Zealand lead 1-0

## BOTTOMLINE

## England thrash Windies to sweep T20 series

Reuters  
Basseterre

England ended their Caribbean tour on an upbeat note when they thrashed West Indies by eight wickets in the final Twenty20 international on Sunday to sweep the three-match series.

Fast-medium bowler David Willey rattled through West Indies' top order, taking 4-7 off three overs as England dismissed the home team for a paltry 71 in 13 overs at Basseterre in Saint Kitts and Nevis.

The capitulation left West Indies with the ignominy of being the first team to score less than 75 in consecutive T20 internationals, following their 45-run total in the second game on Friday.

No West Indies batsman scored more than 11. It took England just 10.3 overs to polish off their victory target, Jonny

**The capitulation left West Indies with the ignominy of being the first team to score less than 75 in consecutive T20 internationals, following their 45-run total in the second game on Friday**

Bairstow scoring a quickfire 37.

The dye was cast from the first ball on a slowish wicket when Shai Hope gave an easy catch to short cover off Willey, who was named man-of-the-match.

"My role up front there is to try to swing the new ball," Willey said. "Tonight it didn't swing a great deal but I put it in the right area and there was a bit of hold in the pitch for me and it forced some errors from the West Indies."

Captain Eoin Morgan was particularly pleased with the performance of some of his fringe players who got a chance to play when several first-choice players were rested.

ing run-scorer, was out for four. Mominul Haque followed for 10 and Shadman Islam for 29 leaving Mohamed Mithun on 25 with Soumya Sarkar not out 12.

Tamim said letting Taylor off the hook early really hurt.

"It was sad that we dropped catches of someone, twice in the same over, who went to hit a double-hundred," he said.

"They ended up scoring five an over. It is hurting us."

New Zealand piled on 394 runs in 73 overs on Monday before sending Bangladesh back in for 23 overs before stumps.

Taylor clouted Taijul Islam for six over the long-on boundary to bring up his century which took him past his mentor, the late Martin Crowe, to become New Zealand's second most prolific century-maker with 18, two behind Kane Williamson.

He put on 172 with Williamson for the third wicket and then 216 with Henry Nicholls for the fourth.

But after reaching 200 for the third time in his career, and raising his bat in salute, he was dismissed from the next ball he faced, caught behind off Mustafizur.

Williamson, who batted with a painful shoulder injury, made it through to 74 before he was dismissed and taken for a scan which proved inconclusive.

He will have a second scan today morning.

Nicholls swept Taijul Islam to the boundary to bring up his fifth century in the second over after tea, but only faced another seven deliveries before Taijul bowled him for 107.

"Guys who don't get a huge amount of opportunities have stuck their hand up on numerous occasions and it's really exciting to see," Morgan said, naming bowlers Willey and Chris Jordan and batsmen Sam Billings and Joe Denly. West Indies captain Jason Holder said his team needed to learn to adjust to the batting conditions.

"If conditions aren't true in terms of the ball coming onto the bat we've got to adapt and set it up for our middle and lower (order) in the back half of the innings," he said.

England return home having improved as their tour progressed. They lost the test series 2-1 then drew the one-dayers 2-2 before sweeping the Twenty20 matches.

## BRIEF SCORES

**West Indies:** 71 all out (Campbell 11, Holder 11, Willey 4 for 7) Lost to **England:** 72 for 2 (Bairstow 37, Hales 20) by eight wickets



Kamran Akmal of Peshawar Zalmi in action against the Karachi Kings at the National Cricket Stadium in Karachi yesterday.

## Kohli slams 'inconsistent' DRS after Australia defeat

**New Delhi:** Skipper Virat Kohli has slammed the decision review system (DRS) as "not consistent" after India had a referral turned down by the TV umpire and went on to lose the fourth one-day international to a record Australia chase in Mohali. Ashton Turner hit an unbeaten 43-ball 84 to lead Australia's 359-run chase on Sunday – their highest ever in ODI cricket – to level the five-match series at 2-2 on Sunday. The final match is in Delhi on Wednesday.

Turner, on 41, was on the receiving end of a caught behind appeal off Yuzvendra Chahal in the 44th over that was turned down by the on-field umpire but reviewed by the home team.

Although replays suggested a gap between the ball and the bottom edge of the bat, the "snickometer" showed a spike at the moment the ball passed the bat but the third umpire chose not to overturn the onfield call.

Kohli was not pleased with the decision but accepted his team's inadequacies against a superior Australia in the post-match presentation.

"We were sloppy in the field and should've grabbed our chances," Kohli said of his team's fielding lapses.

"But the DRS call was a bit of surprise for all of us and it's becoming a more of a talking point every game. It's just not consistent at all. That was a game-changing moment," said Kohli.

It was the second straight time in the series that DRS had been questioned after a review by Australia skipper Aaron Finch in the third ODI in Ranchi could have had an outcome on the game that the tourists finally won. Finch was trapped leg before on 93 by India's left-arm wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav and the umpire raised his finger.

The opener called for a review which showed Yadav's delivery pitching on middle stump but ball-tracking technology then showed the ball pitching on the line of leg stump and hitting leg stump. The on-field call was upheld and Australia lost Finch and their sole review.

However Finch said overall that DRS was a "pretty good system".

NBA

# Lowly Suns shock Warriors, Lowry shines for Raptors

'We are getting challenged, we are getting teams' best shots'



Phoenix Suns' Devin Booker (right) and Golden State Warriors' Stephen Curry (left) vying for the ball during their NBA game at Oracle Arena. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

AFP  
Los Angeles

Phoenix guard Devin Booker scored 37 points as the Suns snapped an 18-game losing streak to the two-time defending NBA champion Golden State Warriors with a 115-111 victory on Sunday.

Golden State had no answer for Booker's late charge as the American scored 13 consecutive points during a key fourth quarter stretch for the Suns.

The win ended the league's longest active losing streak to one team, which dated back to November 2014. It was also the first road victory for the Suns in 20 games against a Western Conference opponent.

"We are getting challenged, we are getting teams' best shots," said Warriors superstar Stephen Curry.

Kevin Durant had 25 points for the mistake-prone Warriors before leaving with a bruised right ankle midway through the fourth quarter. Golden State coach Steve

Kerr said after the game that the injury did not seem serious and that an MRI would likely not be needed. "I think he's going to be all right," Kerr said. "He had an ankle contusion, but I don't think it's bad."

Booker made all nine of his free throws and had 11 assists while Kelly Oubre scored 22 points for the Suns, who won their fourth game in the last five.

Booker hit a jump shot with five minutes to go in the fourth and then drained a three-pointer to make it 102-98 with 4:45 remaining. Klay Thompson's two free throws with 64 seconds to go brought the Warriors within three.

Andre Iguodala grabbed a rebound after two missed Suns shots but Curry missed on a three with 23 seconds left. Booker then converted two free throws.

Curry finished with 18 points on six-of-20 shooting and Thompson went 10 of 22 to finish with 28 points. Overall, the Warriors went a lowly 10 of 43 from beyond the arc. Thompson called the game the "worst loss of the season" and criticized the Warriors' fans, saying they are

not cheering hard enough. "I expect our crowd to go into it, too," he said. "It's hard to conjure up energy... so we expect our fans to kind of bring that from the jump. We need energy from them because we feed off it."

Elsewhere, Kyle Lowry finished with 24 points and 10 assists as the Toronto Raptors snapped the Miami Heat's win streak at four games with a 125-104 blowout victory. Lowry drained six three pointers and

RESULTS

Minnesota	103-92	New York
San Antonio	121-114	Milwaukee
Dallas	93-94	Houston
Atlanta	128-116	New Orleans
Phoenix	115-111	Golden State
Memphis	105-97	Orlando
Toronto	125-104	Miami
Philadelphia	106-89	Indiana
Detroit	131-108	Chicago

Pascal Siakam added 20 points for the Raptors, who have swept all three meetings with the Heat this season. Raptors star Kawhi Leonard did not play - the team did not give a specific reason but he is not believed to be hurt.

Danny Green and Norman Powell added 15 points each for Toronto, while OG Anunoby and Jeremy Lin each contributed 11 points. Bam Adebayo led the Heat with 19 points, six rebounds and five assists. Veteran guard Dwyane Wade and Dion Waiters each had 15 points, while Rodney McGruder added 13.

The Raptors torched the Heat for 21 three-pointers, the most Miami has allowed in club history. Toronto also shot 57 percent from the field.

Elsewhere, Joel Embiid scored 33 points in his first game back after missing eight with a sore knee as the Philadelphia 76ers beat the Indiana Pacers, 106-89. Embiid returned in style to record his league-best 49th double-double of the season as the Sixers snapped a two-game losing streak.

NFL

## Steelers to take \$21.12mn cap hit despite Brown trade

Reuters  
Washington

The Pittsburgh Steelers' trade of wide receiver Antonio Brown to the Oakland Raiders can be consummated tomorrow when the new NFL year begins. And while he will be gone, he won't be forgotten.

That's because the Steelers must devote \$21.12 million of their 2019 cap space to Brown.

The Steelers will take a dead-money cap hit of \$11.4 million for the remainder of his \$19 million signing bonus with the Steelers and \$9.72 million from his restructured contract in 2018. Despite the salary cap cost, the team is saving \$15 million in cash from his salary.

Brown will be receiving that amount - and more - from the Raiders. The Raiders will pay Brown \$50.1 million over the next three seasons, with \$30.1 million of it guaranteed. He had no guaranteed money left on his contract with the Steelers.

The 30-year-old wideout now becomes the top offensive threat in Oakland after a remarkable but sometimes turbulent nine-season stint with Pittsburgh.

Brown has surpassed 1,250 receiving yards in six straight years and hauled in double-digit touchdowns in four of his past five seasons.

Quarterback Derek Carr seemingly embraced his soon-to-be teammate on social media after word of the trade spread Saturday night.

When Brown tweeted a video that showed him with Carr at the Pro Bowl, he captioned it: "Love at first Sight.....@derekcarrqb"

Carr's response: "Brother let's get to work!"

CHIEFS RELEASE  
OLB HOUSTON

The Kansas City Chiefs released outside linebacker Jus-

tin Houston on Sunday, saving \$14 million in salary cap space.

Multiple outlets reported the Chiefs tried to trade Houston, but no team was willing to take on his \$15.5 million salary for 2019. Houston was set to count \$21.1 million against the cap, which will be reduced to a dead-money hit of \$7.1 million.

"Justin has made a lasting impact on this franchise and I can't thank him enough for his contributions over the years," general manager Brett Veach said in a statement. "These decisions are never easy. I have a great deal of respect for Justin as a player and person and I wish him and his family the best moving forward."

Houston, 30, missed four games to injury in 2018 but still managed nine sacks and 12 quarterback hits, after posting 9.5 and 20, respectively, in 15 games in 2017.

However, he has missed 21 games to injury over the last four seasons and hasn't made the Pro Bowl since 2015.

A third-round pick out of Georgia in 2011, Houston made four straight Pro Bowls from 2012-15, earning first-team All-Pro honours by notching 22 sacks - a half-sack shy of the NFL single-season record - in 2014. His 78.5 career sacks rank fourth all-time in Chiefs history since the statistic became official in 1982.

The Chiefs placed the franchise tag on edge rusher Dee Ford earlier this month, but his spot on the roster is not necessarily secure.

Various reports have said Kansas City could trade Ford for as little as a second-round pick, in part because he isn't a perfect fit at defensive end in new coordinator Steve Spagnuolo's scheme.

The Chiefs have drafted edge rushers in the second round in each of the last two drafts: Tanoh Kpassagnon in 2017 and Breland Speaks in 2018.

### Seahawks' Clark won't report without extension

Seattle Seahawks defensive end Frank Clark doesn't plan to sign his franchise tender or report to training camp without a new contract, NFL Network reported on Sunday.

Per the report, Clark would - absent an extension - miss training camp and play out the regular season with the intention of hitting free agency next spring, when Seattle might not be able to tag him again. Other Seahawks currently without contracts for 2020 include quarterback Russell Wilson, middle linebacker Bobby Wagner and defender tackle Jarran Reed.

Clark, who was tagged last week, has been vocal about his intentions to maximise his earnings, but he has said on multiple occasions he hopes to remain in Seattle. The sides have until July 15 to reach a long-term agreement, or Clark will play the 2019 season on the one-year, \$17.128 million tender.

Fox Sports reported on Friday that teams around the league, including the Buffalo Bills, have shown interest in trading for Clark, but there has been no indication that the Seahawks wish to deal him.

Clark, 25, notched career highs with 13 sacks and 27 quarterback hits in 2018, the final year of his rookie deal after the Seahawks drafted him in the second round in 2015. He earned \$943,938 in 2018. Through four seasons, Clark has 35 sacks and 72 quarterback hits while playing 62 of 64 possible games.

NHL

# Tkachuk nest hat-trick as Flames beat Knights

Reuters  
Calgary

Matthew Tkachuk notched his first career hat-trick along with an assist, while linemates Mikael Backlund scored twice in a three-point game and Michael Frolik collected a career-high four assists as the host Calgary Flames snapped a four-game losing streak with a 6-3 win over the Vegas Golden Knights on Sunday night. David Rittich made 25 saves for the Flames, including a clutch stop on Max Pacioretty midway through the third period when it was a one-goal game. Calgary is once again back atop the Western Conference.

With the score tied late in the second period, Backlund netted the game-winning goal with his second of the night, a nifty deflection for a power-play goal with 21.8 seconds remaining in the middle frame to make it 4-3.

Tkachuk iced the game with two late third-period goals, his first with 4:17 remaining and then an empty netter with 2:32 left on the clock. The Flames, goal starved during their skid, staked themselves to a well-deserved 3-1 lead before the first intermission.

Andrew Mangiapane opened the scoring with a nifty tally 2:40 into the clash, converting the deke on a breakaway caused by some horrible defensive play, and then Backlund netted his first of the night five minutes later with a long wrist shot that found the mark.

RESULTS

Florida	6-1	Detroit
Washington	3-1	Winnipeg
Pittsburgh	4-2	Boston
Calgary	6-3	Las Vegas
Los Angeles	3-2	Anaheim

Brandon Pirri put the Knights on the board with 5:20 left in the opening frame, burying a glorious chance from the slot, but Tkachuk restored Calgary's two-goal edge with 62 seconds remaining in the period by converting on a two-on-one rush. Whatever was said in the Vegas dressing room at the first intermission worked, and the visitors responded in a big way to start the second period.

Reilly Smith scored just 21 seconds into the period with a nifty backhand deke to complete a two-on-one rush of his own, and then Mark Stone tied the clash 59 seconds later by finishing an odd-man rush. Goalie Malcolm Subban made 29 saves for the Golden Knights, who saw their six-game winning streak snapped.

CAPITALS WIN SEVENTH  
STRAIGHT BY BEATING JETS

Carl Hagelin scored the tie-breaking goal in the second period and the Washington Capitals extended their winning streak to seven games with a 3-1 victory over the visiting Winnipeg Jets in a Sunday night battle

of division leaders. Washington now holds a four-point lead over the New York Islanders in the Metropolitan Division. The Jets have a one-point lead over Nashville in the Central Division. For the Capitals, this is their second seven-game winning streak this season.

Nicklas Backstrom and Lars Eller scored the other two Washington goals.

Phoenix Copley started in goal for the Capitals, and the Jets kept him busy. Winnipeg outshot Washington 34-17, but Copley stood tall and finished with 33 saves. Goalie Connor Hellebuyck played in his 200th NHL game and finished with 15 saves but took the loss. The Capitals often had problems generating offensive chances against the speedy Jets but still scored first.

Backstrom fired a shot through traffic that beat Hellebuyck - who was screened by at least one player - for a 1-0 lead. John Carlson got his 50th assist this season on the play, which came 4:35 into the game.

But former Capital Mathieu Perreault tied it less than two minutes later by scoring off a quick pass from Jack Roslovic. Perreault swung around the net and lost Eller and got open to Copley's left, then Roslovic put the pass right on his stick. Washington took the lead back right after Hagelin got out of the penalty box after serving a minor for cross-checking in the second period. Nic Dowd saw Hagelin coming out and flipped a long, high pass that sprung him on a breakaway, and he scored with 5:28 left in the period for a 2-1 lead.



Calgary Flames goalie David Rittich and left wing Matthew Tkachuk (right) celebrate the win over the Las Vegas Golden Knights at Scotiabank Saddledome. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

## RUGBY

## Struggling France need to catch up as WC looms

Reuters  
Paris

France players recently said they could compete with the elite of world rugby but after a masterclass at the hands of Ireland in the Six Nations, they admitted to having dropped too far down with the World Cup looming.

Les Bleus were nowhere to be found in a disastrous first half that saw Ireland open a 19-0 lead and two late tries by Yoann Huget and Camille Chat were just a fig leaf on Sunday.

"All their top players had come off, they had stopped playing," flanker Arthur Ithurria said after the 26-14 defeat - France's 11th in 15 Tests - at the Aviva stadium.

"It's useless to say that we are not far from these teams. We will not win against them by playing the rugby we've been playing."

France were completely domi-



France's flanker Arthur Ithurria (centre) is tackled during the Six Nations match against Ireland at the Aviva Stadium in Dublin on Sunday. (AFP)

nated in possession and territory and they barely held the ball in the opening half and like their 44-8 defeat against England

at Twickenham, they saw their weaknesses exposed.

"Clearly, today, we don't have what it takes (to compete with

the best," said lock Felix Lambey.

"We were trapped in our own half. Personally I did not touch the ball, just like everyone in

the team. We were like 'let's not concede a try, never like 'we're going to score points'."

"It was a weird feeling. It's like we could not get out of our own half," said centre Gael Fickou.

Captain Guilhem Guirado added: "They gave us a lesson on how to keep the ball, it was impossible to steal it from them."

With only six months before the start of the World Cup, France, who beat Scotland 27-10 after the England loss, are eighth in the world rankings.

In the rare moments France had possession against Ireland, they looked unable to put speed into the game, possibly paying the price of years of tinkering with their halfback pair.

Scrumhalf Antoine Dupont and flyhalf Romain Ntamack started for the second consecutive game but they formed coach Jacques Brunel's seventh pair in 15 games since he took over from Guy Noves in December 2017.

England's Itoje to miss final  
Six Nations clash with Scotland

England lock Maro Itoje will miss their final Six Nations match with Scotland on Saturday due to a knee injury, the Rugby Football Union (RFU) said yesterday. Itoje, who had sustained medial ligament damage during England's 32-20 win over holders Ireland in their opening game, suffered a setback in his bid to recover before Saturday's win against Italy when he limped out of training last week. "Maro Itoje (Saracens) has returned to his club to continue to rehabilitation," the RFU said in a statement. England coach Eddie Jones called up 31 players to prepare for their final match against Scotland at Twickenham, including uncapped quartet Ben Earl, Elliott Stooke, Marcus Smith and Ollie Thorley. Meanwhile, Scotland will be without back-

three trio Tommy Seymour (rib), Blair Kinghorn (ankle) and Stuart Hogg (shoulder) due to injuries, Scottish Rugby said in a statement. Seymour and Kinghorn were injured in Saturday's 18-11 defeat by Wales and the England clash comes too soon for them. Hogg is recovering from a shoulder injury sustained in the 22-13 loss to holders Ireland in the second round last month. Head coach Greg Townsend called up Glasgow Warriors' Ruaridh Jackson and uncapped Kyle Steyn and released Adam Ashe, Tim Swinson, James Johnstone and Luke Crosbie. England, who have beaten Ireland, France and Italy to sit second with 15 points, can still win the championship if they overcome Scotland and table-toppers Wales lose to Ireland.

## TENNIS

## Past champs Nadal, Federer advance at Indian Wells

'I struggled a little bit with my serving in that second set and that gave him chances'

AFP  
Indian Wells, United States

World number two Rafael Nadal raced into the third round of the ATP Indian Wells Masters as Roger Federer made a less speedy but still successful start to his quest for a sixth title on Sunday.

Nadal, a three-time Indian Wells winner, needed just 72 minutes to get past overmatched Jared Donaldson, 6-1, 6-1.

Federer, who is seeking to break out of a tie with top seed Novak Djokovic for most titles in the California desert, looked set for a similarly easy time of it, but had to turn back a second-set challenge from German Peter Gojowczyk in a 6-1, 7-5 win.

Fourth-seeded Federer said he was relieved not to go to a second-set tiebreaker after falling behind 3-1 to the free-swinging German, who is ranked 85th in the world.

The Swiss regained the break and, after saving four break points to make it 4-4, cruised home.

"I struggled a little bit with my serving in that second set and that gave him chances. Because he was serving better, he started to swing more freely and then it was tough," Federer said.

"I'm really happy I found a way in that second set."

Federer next faces compatriot Stan Wawrinka, a three-time Grand Slam champion currently unseeded as he continues his return from injury.

Wawrinka won a taut thriller against 29th-seeded Hungarian Marton Fucsovics, 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 7-5, finally sealing it on his fifth match point after three hours and 24 minutes when Fucsovics lofted a lob long.

Nadal, playing his third tournament of a year that started with a crushing loss to Djokovic in the Australian Open final and included an early exit in Acapul-



Rafael Nadal of Spain plays a backhand against Jared Donaldson of the United States during their second round match on day seven of the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden in Indian Wells, California. (Getty Images/AFP)

co, converted five of his six break chances against Donaldson and never faced a break point himself. He next faces Diego Schwartzman, who beat Spain's Roberto Carballes, 6-3, 6-1. Nadal is 6-0 against the Argentine. "Today was a very positive step for me, and the next one is going to be against a player that we know each other very well. We practised a lot of times, and we played some tough matches," Nadal said.

"It's going to be a tough one against Diego," he added, calling Schwartzman "one of the best talents of the sport today."

In other early matches, sixth-seeded Kei Nishikori of Japan survived a scare in a 6-4, 4-6, 7-6 (7/4) victory over France's Adrian Mannarino. Mannarino, ranked 52nd in the world, served for the match at 6-5 in the third.

He couldn't muster a match point and double-faulted on break point, and that was enough

of a window for Nishikori.

"I think in the tiebreak I played the best tennis of the match. I was really focused," said Nishikori, who opened 2019 with a title in Brisbane and then reached the quarter-finals of the Australian Open.

Nishikori next faces 67th-ranked Hubert Hurkacz of Poland, who defeated France's Lucas Pouille, 6-2, 3-6, 6-4.

Eighth-seeded American John Isner routed Australian quali-

fier Alexei Popyrin, 6-0, 6-2, the most lopsided win of Isner's career. He'll play Guido Pella, who won his first title at Sao Paulo last week. Pella ended the hopes of another Aussie qualifier, Alex Bolt, 7-6 (7/5), 2-6, 6-3.

Tenth-seeded Croatian Marin Cilic downed Serbian Dusan Lajovic, 6-3, 6-4 to book a meeting with 19-year-old Canadian Denis Shapovalov, the 24th seed who beat American Steve Johnson, 6-3, 6-4.

## FOCUS

## Wales yet to hit top gear, says North

Reuters  
Cardiff

Wales wing George North says his side have yet to hit top gear in this year's Six Nations despite extending their winning run to 13 tests with victory over Scotland at Murrayfield.

Wales will host defending champions Ireland on Saturday in Cardiff, where victory will seal the Grand Slam and crown Warren Gatland's side Six Nations winners for the first time since 2013.

However, a win for Ireland, coupled with a surprise home loss for England against Scotland, could see Joe Schmidt's team retain the trophy.

"We've shown glimpses, but we haven't really hit our straps yet," North told the Welsh Rugby Union website (www.wru.wales).

"For us, we know there is another level there. We have just got to make sure we are on one page in terms of consistency and get a good week's prep in and then focus on Saturday."

Wales have yet to secure a bonus point this season with only nine tries scored in their four games, with the team relying on their impressive defence to secure victories.

"There is a good belief in the squad and a good vibe. We can dog games out when we need to," North said. He added that his side had committed too many errors against the Scots before emerging with a scrappy 18-11 win.

"There were too many errors in key areas of the field and we allowed Scotland straight back in. To be fair to them, they put us back in our 22 and we were under a lot of pressure," said North.

"It wasn't the performance we were after, but it certainly puts us in a good position in terms of carrying on to the Ireland week."

North is well aware of the threat posed by Saturday's visitors, who completed a solid 26-14 victory over France on Sunday to keep their championship hopes alive.

"Ireland are a quality team who have come to Cardiff before and done a job on us. We will debrief the Scotland game and we've only got a short turnaround, so it's full steam ahead for Saturday now," the wing said.

"I guess Ireland have had a similar sort of tournament to us. They've shown great glimpses, but also not had the consistency."

"They are still dogging it out. It makes the last game very interesting."

## TRAGEDY

## USA's three-time cycling world champ Catlin dead at 23

AFP  
Washington

American cyclist Kelly Catlin, a three-time world champion and 2016 Rio Olympic runner-up in team pursuit, has died at age 23, USA Cycling confirmed Sunday.

Catlin was part of the US team pursuit squads that captured world titles in 2016, 2017 and 2018 but she withdrew from the American team that failed to defend the title February 27-28 at the 2019 worlds in Poland.

"The US cycling community suffered a devastating loss with the passing of Kelly Catlin," USA Cycling president Rob DeMartini said in a statement.

"Kelly was more than an athlete to us and she will always be part of the USA Cycling family."

"The entire cycling community is mourning this immense loss... We are deeply saddened by Kelly's passing, and we will miss her dearly."

A report in VeloNews on Sunday said Catlin committed suicide on Thursday night, citing an e-mail from her father Mark and Facebook posting from her brother Colin.

A statement by Stanford University, where Catlin was working on a graduate degree in Computational and Math-



In this file picture, the USA's Kelly Catlin celebrates after winning women's individual pursuit bronze in Hong Kong on April 15, 2017. (Reuters)

ematical Engineering, said an unnamed student was found dead in her on-campus residence by her roommate Thursday with no signs of foul play.

Catlin, who also took bronze in individual pursuit at the 2017 and 2018 worlds, was also mourned by her professional team, Rally UHC Cycling.

"The news of Kelly's passing has hit the team hard," the team said in a Twitter posting. "Losing an incredible person at such a young age is very difficult. 'Kelly was our friend and teammate. Our heartfelt condolences go out to her family and those who were fortunate enough to know her best.'"

## Illness ends Serena's Indian Wells bid, No. 2 Halep advances

Serena Williams's first tournament since the Australian Open came to an abrupt end on Sunday as the ailing 23-time Grand Slam champion retired from her third-round WTA match against Garbine Muguruza at Indian Wells. Muguruza was leading 6-3, 1-0 when Williams called it a day in the battle of former world number ones because of a viral illness. "Before the match, I did not feel great, and then it just got worse with every second;

extreme dizziness and extreme fatigue," Williams said in comments released via tournament organisers. The 10th-seeded American, continuing to work her way back up the rankings in the wake of time off to have a baby, had made a strong start, winning the first three games. But she called for the trainer after dropping six straight. After a long talk with medical personnel Williams took the court for the second set, but

after Muguruza held serve at love Williams called a halt. "By the score, it might have looked like I started well, but I was not feeling at all well physically," Williams said. "I will focus on getting better and start preparing for Miami." It was the sixth meeting between Muguruza and Williams, all five prior coming in Grand Slams. The last two of those were in finals, with Williams beating the Spaniard for the Wimbledon title in 2015 and Muguruza tak-

ing the 2016 French Open crown. It was a tough draw for Williams, who defeated former world number one Victoria Azarenka in her second-round opener. Muguruza was sorry to see it end the way it did. "We've played many times and it's always super-tough, super-exciting," Muguruza said. "I wish I'm going to see her soon and feeling better," added the Spaniard, who advanced to a fourth-round clash with seventh-seeded Kiki

Bertens of the Netherlands, a 7-6 (12/10), 6-4 winner over Britain's Johanna Konta. Serving for the match, Bertens saved one break point and let two match points slide by before she reached the round of 16 for the first time at Indian Wells when Konta sent a forehand wide. Simona Halep had her hands full with qualifier Kateryna Kozlova but emerged with a 7-6 (7/3), 7-5 victory in her first meeting with the 114th-ranked player.

MANATEQ QATAR INTERNATIONAL RALLY

# Eight teams from Oman set to challenge for honours in Qatar

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

Oman may not have hosted a round of the FIA Middle East Rally Championship (MERC) since Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah claimed victory in a Ford Fiesta RRC in 2015, but rallying is a popular sport in the country nonetheless and eight teams will make the trip to take part in this weekend's Manateq Qatar International Rally and Manateq Qatar National Rally.

A resurgence in interest in special stage rallying in the Middle East is partly due to the intense competition between the Toyota, Hyundai, Ford and Citroën factory teams in the FIA World Rally Championship and sterling work put in by the Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF) to encourage entrants to take part in rallies in Qatar.

Six Omani crews tackled the Qatar event last November - when it was the final MERC round - and this year's opening round has attracted two further teams from the southern Gulf country.

Saif al-Harthy and his co-driver Mohamed al-Mazrouii head the Oman contingent in the FIA category in a Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution that they hope will take them to MERC 2 honours in the showroom category for Group N vehicles.

Kuwait's Meshari al-Thefiri is the regional champion in MERC 2 and Qatar's Abdullah al-Kuwari won the category in his home event last season, but Oman's weight of numbers on the entry list could give visiting teams a superb chance of challenging for success.

Omani Abdullah al-Ruwahi and his Jordanian navigator Ata al-Hmoud suffered bad luck on a couple of rallies last season and

the youngster will be hoping for better fortune in his Subaru Impreza STI. Zakariya al-Shanfari and Abdullah al-Amri have entered a similar car from the Japanese stable.

Five further Omani crews are entered in the Manateq Qatar National Rally that runs behind the main event.

The British expatriate crew of Shaun McGonigal and Nath Marriott are running a Subaru Impreza STi on Omani licences, while the Sultanate's line-up is completed by Humaid al-Waili/Issa al-Wardi (Mitsubishi), Hamid al-Qassimi/Mohamed al-Mazroui (Mitsubishi), Faisal and Waleed al-Rashdi (Subaru) and Zakariya Afi/Ammar al-Bulushi (Mitsubishi).

The punishing deserts of Qatar are the domain of powerful four-wheel drive cars, where traction is crucial and the risk of punctures is very real. But two competitors have decided to buck the trend

and take part in the event in a pair of nimble little two-wheel drive, near-standard, Renault Clios.

The cars lack the power and traction needed to cope with some of the rocky terrain and finishing without damaging the car is the realistic goal for both Jordan's Asem Aref and Qatar's Nadim Ziade.

Aref has tackled the event before in the MERC 3 section and teams up with fellow Jordanian Faris al-Tal. Ziade will line up at the start with Lebanese co-driver Naji Sfeir in the National Rally section at the rear of the field.

This year's rally gets underway with a ceremonial start and opening super special stage at Souq Al Wakrah on Thursday.

Both the start and the Al Wakrah super special will be televised live on the Al-Rayyan satellite channel and rally officials have introduced a WRC-style concept to the format of the super special as well.



Saif Abdullah al-Harthy and co-driver Mohamed al-Mazrouii head the Oman contingent.

FORMULA 1

# 'Emotion to one side' as Ferrari's Leclerc steps into big time

'I get on well with Italians, which makes things easier when I meet future mechanics'

AFP  
Paris

Ferrari's new driver Charles Leclerc is only 21 and the second youngest driver in the history of Formula One's most famous stable.

But he is already making waves as he embarks on his second Grand Prix season with a growing maturity that was on display in his rookie performance for Sauber last year.

He finished the year in 13th place overall in the drivers' championship with one top six finish to his credit.

Born within earshot of the world's most iconic Grand Prix circuit, Monte Carlo, Leclerc was seen from an early age as a hot prospect with impeccable racing pedigree.

His late father Herve was a Formula 3 driver and Leclerc raced for the first time aged just four on a circuit owned by his father's best friend, Philippe Bianchi.

His son Jules Bianchi, a mentor and role model for Leclerc, made a name for himself in racing before his tragic death following a crash at the 2014 Japanese Grand Prix.

Expectations are high this season that Ferrari and Leclerc's teammate Sebastian Vettel can break Lewis Hamilton's stranglehold on the world championship and win the title for the Italian giants for the first time since 2007.

Hamilton is challenging for his sixth title and third in a row this year. But the experienced four-time world champion Vettel, 31, was fastest of all the



In this February 28, 2019, picture, Ferrari driver Charles Leclerc (also inset) takes part in Formula 1 tests at the Circuit de Catalunya near Barcelona. (AFP)

drivers during pre-season team testing in Spain in February.

Remarkably, Leclerc was just behind him in second spot.

The Monaco native is a product of Ferrari's driving academy, and he is comfortable with the Italian way of doing things ahead of next weekend's season opener in Australia.

"I get on well with Italians," he said recently. "Which makes things easier when I meet, for example, my future mechanics

at Ferrari. "What I have always liked about Italians is the way they are serious when they need to be but know how to relax and have a laugh too.

"That is very important for life balance for a driver, to have an understanding with the team."

Leclerc joined the elite Ferrari academy in 2016, and is the only graduate to win a place in the cockpit as a Ferrari Grand Prix racer.

The pressure on his shoulders, particularly in Italy, is immense.

"I was pretty emotional when the car was unveiled, that was a very special day for me," he said during testing in Barcelona.

"But now that I am actually at the track, I have switched to work mode, and I am trying to put the emotion to one side."

"I try to create a vacuum, to stop thinking about (the expectations)," he said.

"It is vitally important for

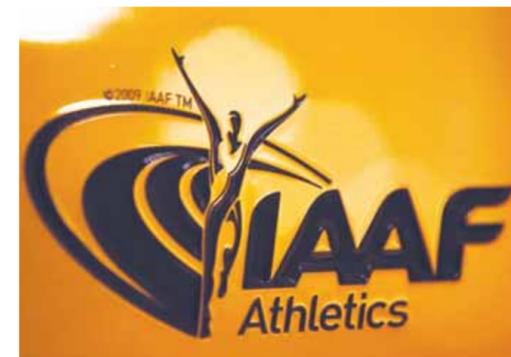
me to concentrate on myself, on the work that I have to do on the track and off it with the engineers, without really thinking about what people are expecting from me on the outside."

The fluent Italian speaker says that his integration in the team has gone "super well" and the team ethic is already strong.

"They gave me a good welcome and I know how they work and they know how I work. And that is crucial."

FOCUS

# IAAF maintains ban on Russian athletics over doping scandal



Reuters  
Doha

World athletics governing body IAAF has decided not to lift a ban on Russia's athletics federation over doping, saying yesterday it was still waiting to receive data collected from Moscow and financial compensation for its investigations.

Russia's athletics federation (RUSAF) has been suspended since 2015 following a World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) report that found evidence of widespread doping in the sport.

The IAAF's governing council discussed the possibility of lifting the ban at a meeting in Doha on Sunday and yesterday.

But Rune Andersen, chair of the IAAF's Russia Taskforce, said Moscow had yet to meet two conditions.

"Logistical" issues had held up financial compensation, including for the taskforce's costs and legal costs in cases Russia had brought to the courts, he said, adding that the IAAF had also not yet received analytical data and samples from a Moscow lab, which are still being assessed by WADA.

"Those (issues) need to be resolved. As soon as we have everything we need... we will seriously reconsider and recommend to the IAAF council for reinstatement (of Russia)," Andersen said.

Should it fail to meet IAAF conditions, Russia could risk sending a team to September's world athletics championships in Doha, Qatar.

Individual Russian athletes would be allowed to compete as neutrals as they have since 2015 provided they meet certain criteria that showed they had operated in a dope-free environment.

SEEKING FUNDS

Russian officials and IAAF president Sebastian Coe said Russia owes the governing body about \$3m and discussions were continuing.

"Of course, we have worked and are working to finding sources of funding to pay the debt," Dmitry Shlyakhtin, president of Russia's athletics federation, said in a statement.

"This is quite an ample sum for the federation. Let's not for-

get that the federation lost sponsors in connection with the doping scandal. You cannot call the federation's financial situation simple. In parallel we are in talks with the IAAF regarding payments."

Russia's sports ministry did not immediately reply to a Reuters request for comment.

Russian authorities have denied their doping programme was state-sponsored but have accepted that senior officials were involved in providing banned substances to athletes, interfering with anti-doping procedures or covering up positive tests.

The IAAF also said the Taskforce had noted comments made to German television network ARD over the weekend that some coaches, with links to the doping affair, were involved again with coaching Russian national team athletes.

"This runs counter to assurances the Taskforce has previously received from RUSAF that it is disassociating itself from the old regime," the IAAF said.

"The Taskforce will be asking RUSAF for urgent clarification." Coe said he believed progress had been made in Russia, "but I think it was sensible to maintain the suspension".

Russia's reinstatement has been rejected several times by the IAAF over the past three years. The athletics body is the only other major sports organisation to keep Russia banned for at least the coming months.

Both WADA and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) have revoked their suspensions of Russia while the International Paralympic Committee has said it will reinstate Russia by March 15.

Coe said there had been no inquiries from either the IAAF or WADA about reinstating the Russian federation.

"We (the council) made the judgment ourselves that we would support the recommendation of the Taskforce and clearly the data that is still being examined at WADA and will come to the AIU (Athletics Integrity Unit) is still a large part of that criteria," he said.

Coe would not speculate on when the ban could be resolved. "I don't know the answer to that," he said. "The criteria has to be met!"

## The cost of success: Big three F1 giants are also biggest spenders

AFP  
Paris

Mercedes, Ferrari and Red Bull were the three most successful teams in the Formula One world championship in 2018, spending more money than the other seven teams combined. According to journalist Dieter Rencken, who each year calculates the financial figures for Racefans.net, the cost of keeping two cars on track in the championship is around 100m euros. Worried by spiralling costs, F1 will impose a budget ceiling of \$150m from 2021.

**TEAM BUDGETS IN 2018:**  
1. Ferrari (2nd in constructors championship) - \$410m (361m euros) total  
950 employees + 480 in engine

department  
Receives the largest part of the sport's commercial revenues redistributed by F1 on account of the team's historic status in the sport. Backed also by cigarette manufacturers Philip Morris via their 'Mission Winnow' project.

2. Mercedes (1st) - \$400m (352m euros) total  
950 employees + 500 in engine department  
Daimler-Benz's F1 activities are split into two - Mercedes GP for race operations and the power-trains, operating independently.

3. Red Bull (3rd) - \$310m (272m euros)  
Should benefit in 2019 from sister team Toro Rosso and common engine supplier Honda  
4. McLaren (6th)



Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton. - \$220m (194m euros) 760 employees Supported by Middle East investors but despite losing Fernando Alonso for the new season, will benefit from various new sponsors one of which is British American Tobacco through their project 'A better

tomorrow'  
5. Renault (4th) - \$190m (167m euros) 680 employees + 300 in engine department Strategic partnership of Renault-Nissan-Mitsubishi but overshadowed by the Carlos Ghosn affair

6. Williams (10th) - \$150m (132m euros) 630 employees Lost title sponsor Martini for the season to be replaced by telecommunications company ROKiT. With the support also of Canadian multi-millionaire businessman Lawrence Stroll - the father of driver Lance Stroll.

6. Toro Rosso (9th) - \$150m (132m euros) 460 employees Should benefit in 2019 from its

sister team Red Bull and common engine supplier Honda  
8. Alfa Romeo Racing (ex-Sauber) (8th) - \$135m (119m euros) 400 employees Benefitted since 2018 by a Ferrari engine deal and now boasts support of Alfa Romeo

9. Haas (5th) - \$130m (115m euros) 250 employees Will benefit in 2019 from a title sponsor, energy drinks manufacturer Rich Energy

10. Racing Point (ex-Force India) (7th) - \$120m (105m euros) 405 employees Will benefit in 2019 from new title sponsor, internet sports betting site SportPesa

## SPOTLIGHT

# Riders school, expansion of Rayyan racecourse on cards

QREC chairman al-Mohannadi says the first meeting of the Board of Directors saw the launch of a package of projects aimed to develop the infrastructure at QREC

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

**Q**atar Racing and Equestrian Club (QREC) chairman Issa bin Mohamed al-Mohannadi chaired the first meeting of the Board of Directors after HE the Minister of Culture and Sports Salah bin Ghanem bin Nasser al-Ali formed the body for a term of four years.

The meeting was attended by Board members, including the new member, Ahmad bin Mohamed al-Abdulmalik, and the QREC CEO Nasser bin Sherida al-Kaabi.

During the meeting, several matters related to the QREC were discussed and some important decisions were taken in favour of the Qatari equestrian and its progress. These decisions include a package of projects to develop the QREC's infrastructure and to achieve the organisation's vision of promoting Qatar as a world hub for horse racing.

Following the meeting, al-Mohannadi said, "We would like to thank HE the Minister of Culture and Sports for supporting QREC and commitment to provide stability, which ensures realising the planned objectives in the coming years. The first meeting saw the launch of a package of projects aimed to develop the infrastructure at QREC. Such projects will be self-financed by QREC and also funded through sponsorships by a number of the country's organisations collaborating with QREC.

"This package of projects includes the expansion of the Al Rayyan Racecourse to match the scope and standing

of horse racing in Qatar at present. This step will deliver an excellent result for owners, trainers and jockeys, and will maximise the racecourse's capacity and consequently bring about a significant move in the international and the local race meetings run every season.

"It has also been decided to build a riding school at QREC and provide the necessary related support. It is considered as one of the most important projects at QREC as it is intended to produce new riders who can take over in future.

"The new school project is built on previous related steps taken by QREC in terms of organising rides for young riders (pony rides), the latest of which was held during the HH The Amir Sword Festival. This type of rides will help produce a base of young and new riders over the time.

"It has also been decided to complete the development of the quarantine in line with the international requirements and to concurrently operate the Vet Clinic. In addition, new stables will be built to meet the needs of QREC and all participants and to provide the best environment for horses, which will, in turn, enhance their performance.

"It was further agreed, during the meeting, to establish the Qatar National Stud with a view to support Qatari jockeys in riding on a larger scale in local race meetings and also provide them with the opportunity to ride overseas with the Stud's horses. This will increase the base of riders as well as their chances of riding. In fact, QREC is committed to providing Qatari riders with training opportunities such as the



Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club (QREC) chairman Issa bin Mohamed al-Mohannadi chairs the first meeting of the Board of Directors.

training camp, which was organised for them in South Africa. In addition, the Stud's activities will include breeding by the QREC's excellent stallions."

HE the Minister of Culture and

Sports issued a decision forming the QREC Board of Directors recently. It includes chairman Issa bin Mohamed al-Mohannadi, the vice-chairman Hamad bin Abdulrahman al-Attiyah, and

members Khalid bin Mohamed al-Ali, Khalifa bin Mohamed al-Attiyah, Ahmad bin Mohamed al-Abdulmalik and Abdulla bin Mohamed al-Kuwari.

The term of the current board is four

years and it shall act in accordance with the terms of reference and powers stipulated in the QREC's Statutes, which were approved by the HE the Minister before the end of last year.

## AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

## Al Sadd seek revenge against Persepolis



Al Sadd captain and midfielder Xavi Hernandez (left) is back in training, but is a doubtful starter for today's AFC Champions League group stage match against Persepolis at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium. PICTURE: Anas al-Samarrae

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

**A**l Sadd head coach Jesualdo Ferreira described his team's AFC Champions League Group D match against Iran's Persepolis today a tough one. Despite their strong domestic form of late - Al Sadd sit top of the Qatar Stars League - the Doha club got off to a poor start on the continent as they lost 2-0 to Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli last week, and they will be desperate to get points on the board in what is a tough-looking group.

Sadd will be also seeking to avenge last year's AFC Champions League semi-final defeat to Persepolis when the sides meet once more in at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium today. Ferreira's men were edged out 2-1 on aggregate in the 2018 semi-final after the teams had also shared a win apiece in the group stage.

Al Sadd captain and midfielder Xavi Hernandez was back in training this week after an injury layoff, but is a doubtful starter for today's match. Defender Boualem Khoukhi may also sit out of the game due to injury.

Speaking at the pre-match press confer-

ence, Ferreira said: "We are looking forward to an intense game. Our preparations have been normal for this game. We did not give our best in the game against Al Ahli. Defeats always have a negative effect and it is a warning bell for us before the Persepolis game, and so it is now time to make amends. All the players are fully prepared for tomorrow's game but we need to wait before we can confirm the starting lineup for the game."

Asked if the team was looking for revenge, Ferreira said: "If the Persepolis game was a final, it would have been a revenge match, after we lost to them in the semifinal of the last edition. But we are now playing in the group stage and this match has its own specialities. We will be fully ready for this game, in order to achieve our objective which is to get our first three points."

Normally formidable at home, Persepolis would have been disappointed with their opening game as they played out a 1-1 draw with Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor, with Mario Budimir scoring on his AFC Champions League debut. The Tehran side also drew 1-1 with Nassaji Mazandaran on Friday as they edged a point clear at the top of the Iranian Pro League to maintain their bid for a third

successive league title.

### DUHAIL'S ALMOEZ AND MADIBO OUT OF AL HILAL MATCH

Meanwhile, Al Duhail will miss AFC Asian Cup winning pair Almoez Ali and Assem Madibo in their away Group C match against Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal at the King Saud University Stadium today.

Both Ali and Madibo are nurturing injuries, but Moroccan striker Youssef El Arabi, facing his former club, will look to continue the side's run of scoring in each of their last 11 games in the competition.

Rui Faria's men have showed glimpses of the form that saw them deliver a record-equalling nine-match winning run in the 2018 AFC Champions League. The Qatari side cruised past Iran's Esteghlal in a dominant 3-0 in their opening match.

After a disappointing group stage exit last year, Al Hilal started their 2019 campaign with a bang, earning an important 1-0 win on the road against Al Ain last week to get off the mark.

Today's encounter against Duhail marks Al Hilal's first-ever continental match at their new home of King Saud University Stadium, which they had moved to in 2018.

## FOCUS

## Rivas strike gives Rayyan comeback win over Lokomotiv

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

**Q**atar's Al Rayyan came from behind to earn a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Uzbekistan's PFC Lokomotiv at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium in Matchday Two of the 2019 AFC Champions League Group B yesterday.

Lokomotiv had collected all three points in their opening fixture at home against Al Wahda, while Al Rayyan were subjected to a 5-1 defeat by Saudi Arabia's Al Ittihad last week in Jeddah.

The visitors came racing off the blocks and stormed into the lead within four minutes of kick-off to the stunned silent of the home crowd. Temurkhuja Abdulkholikov outmuscled Rodrigo Tabata in midfield to gain possession of the ball and exchanged passes with Jamshid Iskanderon before crossing for Diyorjon Turapov who tapped in at the far post to give Lokomotiv the lead early on.

It took Al Rayyan a few minutes to regroup, but they eventually did and started creating chances. Striker Gelmin Rivas tried his luck from long range but narrowly missed the target. Lokomotiv nearly doubled their lead in the same fashion as their opener, but Jovan Djokic's final touch let him down as he sent the ball high from eight yards out halfway through the first half.

Al Rayyan equalised in the 38th minute through Lucca Borges who received Rivas' pass inside the box and rifled in at the near post to restore parity. The Qatari side's comeback was completed 13 minutes after the restart as Rivas turned from provider to scorer. Tabata's long pass from a free-kick found substitute Sebastian Soria at the far post and the former Qatari international sent a drilled cross across the mouth of goal for the Venezuelan who was well-positioned to apply the finish.

Al Rayyan's next match has them hosting UAE's Al Wahda on April 9th, while Lokomotiv are on the road again as they



Al Rayyan striker Gelmin Rivas (second left) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Uzbekistan's PFC Lokomotiv in AFC Champions League Group B match at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium yesterday. PICTURE: Noushad Thekkayil

face Saudi Arabia's Al Ittihad in Jeddah.

In other match, UAE's Al Wahda FC defeated visitors Al Ittihad Club Saudi Arabia 4-1 in a Group B encounter at the Al Nahyan Stadium in Abu Dhabi. Al Wahda had suffered a 2-0 defeat to Lokomotiv in the opening match day, but are firmly back in business with the thrashing of Saudi Pro League side Ittihad who in turn had beaten Al Rayyan in their opener last week.

After passing up a couple of good chances, Mohamed al-Menhali tapped in a cross from

Sebastian Tagliabue to put the hosts in front in the 32nd minute before Leonardo de Souza made it 2-0 seven minutes after restart. Nasser al-Shamrani pulled one back for the visitors four minutes later, but it was substitute and UAE veteran Ismail Matar who scored a lovely free kick in the 80th minute to put the game beyond the Saudis. Al Wahda still had enough time to add a fourth as Leonardo found his second of the night in the second half added time. The results mean that all teams in the Group B now have three points each.