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GULF TIMES SPORT



FOOTBALL

Klopp hopeful of Salah return for EPL final day

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FOOTBALL/AMIR CUP

Al Sadd clear favourites against Al Rayyan

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Al Sadd coach Jesualdo Ferreira wants to end his Qatar tenure on a triumphant note, by winning the Amir Cup. The experienced Portuguese manager had last month announced he would be leaving Qatar for good, having led Al Sadd to their first league title since the 2012-13 season. The match begins at 10.30pm.

Ahead of Sadd's semi-final encounter against Al Rayyan today, Ferreira said he wants a winning farewell, providing an extra motivation to his players. "I am happy with what we have achieved in the Champions League, qualifying for the second stage at the end of my stint with the club. Now I want to win the Amir Cup before leaving Qatar," said Ferreira at his pre-match press conference.

Having spent three and half years with Al Sadd, Ferreira was

desperate for the league title and he finally delivered on that promise this season. Now they have a golden chance to secure a domestic double.

Sadd will rely on player of the season Akram Afif and prolific scorer Baghdad Bounedjah, with their midfield trio of Xavi Hernandez, Gabi Fernandez and Hassan al-Haydous being the best in the country.

Former Barcelona star Xavi too has announced his retirement and the midfield maestro would want to lay his hands on the prestigious Amir Cup trophy.

But it won't be easy against Al Rayyan, who can be unpredictable and are keen to win a trophy themselves this season.

"It will be a very tough game for us. This is the fourth Amir Cup semi-final for me with Al Sadd and everyone knows how much this tournament means for the fans," Ferreira said.

"We have just one game remaining to reach the final. We cannot

make mistakes because there is no time to make up for them. Our only goal is to win so that we can reach the final. My players deserve to win the trophy. They have been playing since last July, almost a game every three days for club and country but we are fully prepared for this tournament," he added.

Al Sadd defender Pedro Miguel said the team was prepared for the semi-final encounter. "The match against Al Rayyan is very important for us. We are fully prepared for it. We will strive to win the game so that we can reach the final," he said.

Meanwhile, Rayyan captain Rodrigo Tabata called on his team to give their all against the fancied Al Sadd team, while urging their passionate fans to fill the Al Sadd stadium.

"The fans will play a prominent role in our match against Sadd. It's not an easy place to play and we need all the support we can get playing against a top team," he said.

"We will do our utmost to win this match and qualify for the final at the Al Wakrah Stadium. We need to approach the game with collective spirit," Tabata added.

Al Rayyan have been off colour since winning the league title in season in 2015/16 under Jorge Fossati. They finished fourth this season in the league and are already out of the AFC Champions League with one group match to spare.

Al Rayyan coach Gilson de Souza emphasised how much the club is banking their season on the Amir Cup. "Our season was not good, so we have to look for some consolation and our main goal now is to win the Amir Cup," De Souza said.

Rayyan have lost both their meetings against Al Sadd this season. A 5-0 drubbing in September, followed by another 4-0 humbling in September, makes Sadd an overwhelming favourite to reach the Amir Cup final. The other semi-final pits Al Duhail and Al Sailiya, which will be played tomorrow.



Al Sadd coach Jesualdo Ferreira (L) with his Al Rayyan counterpart Gilson de Souza at their pre-match press conference.

SPOTLIGHT

Arsenal and Chelsea set up all-England Europa final

It means all four finalists of Europe's two top club competitions are from the same country for the first time



Arsenal's Gabonese striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang (C) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Valencia at the Mestalla stadium in Valencia on Thursday. Picture on right show Chelsea's English midfielder Ruben Loftus-Cheek (L) exulting after he scored the team's first goal against Eintracht Frankfurt at Stamford Bridge in London on Thursday.



DPA
Berlin

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored a hat-trick as Arsenal defeated Valencia 4-2 and Chelsea beat Eintracht Frankfurt in a penalty shoot-out to set up an all-England Europa League final in Baku on May 29.

With the Champions League in Madrid on June 1 between Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur, it means all four finalists of Europe's two top club competitions are from the same country for the first time. Arsenal progressed in Valencia with Alexandre Lacazette also on target to go through on a 7-3 aggregate and

reached their first European final since losing in the Champions League to Barcelona in 2006.

Chelsea, the 2012-13 winners, and Frankfurt ended the 90 minutes and extra-time at Stamford Bridge at 1-1 and 2-2 on aggregate, before Eden Hazard scored the decisive penalty in a 4-3 shoot-out victory.

In Valencia, the home side went in front through Kevin Gameiro in the 11th minute but Arsenal were on level terms six minutes later when Aubameyang struck with the outside of his foot.

Lacazette swivelled in the area before hitting a right-foot shot into the net five minutes after the break. Gameiro notched his second in the 58th but Aubameyang turned in a cross from Ainsley Maitland-Niles 11 minutes later

and hammered in Arsenal's fourth from an angle in the 88th.

"We reacted well to going behind and we knew we had to score a minimum of one goal tonight," Lacazette told BT Sport.

"Auba was unbelievable tonight with an incredible hat-trick, so thanks to him. "We have played badly in Premier League during the last month and now we have to use this opportunity. We want to play in the Champions League next season and we want the trophy." Arsenal manager Unai Emery said: "I am very proud of the players and the supporters. The players did all they could and we can be proud of the whole club.

"We knew we had to be calm after they scored and we needed to control our emo-

tions. "It is very difficult to score four goals against this team because they are very organised. It gave us confidence to score quickly, we know our strikers are taking chances."

At Stamford Bridge, Chelsea finished a spell of domination when Hazard fed Rubens Loftus-Cheek and the England midfielder side-footed in with a measured shot to give the home side a 28th-minute lead. Frankfurt levelled through Luka Jovic four minutes after the interval and after chances for both sides, Chelsea defender Cesar Azpilicueta thought he had scored a late extra-time winner.

The ball was nudged over the line after keeper Kevin Trapp appeared to lose his grip on the ball, but the goal was ruled out.

The shoot-out then saw Trapp save from

Azpilicueta but Chelsea keeper Kepa Arrizabalaga stopped a Martin Hinteregger shot and saved from Goncalo Paciencia, before Hazard stepped up to convert the winning penalty.

Spanish keeper Kepa had refused to be substituted in the Carabao Cup (League Cup) final before a penalty shoot-out against Manchester City at Wembley earlier this year, leading to a club sanction. "Penalties are down to luck. Today we won and in the Carabao Cup final we lost, but this is football," he told BT Sport.

He added: "Wembley is in the past and I learned from it. I said I was sorry but we always keep moving forward and today was another game and we are happy to get to the final."

SPOTLIGHT

Don't mention Brexit! England rule Europe with historic sweep

The Premier League now has the world's best managers to go with the best players

AFP
Paris

The Premier League has marked its return to prominence on the European stage as stunning Champions League comebacks from Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur to make the final were followed by Arsenal and Chelsea booking their place in the Europa League final.

For the first time ever all four finalists will come from the same country, prompting concerns on the continent over the Premier League's wealth and status thanks to huge television rights deals.

The English sweep on the football field comes, ironically, as the United Kingdom wrestles with Brexit, the painful and protracted withdrawal from the European Union.

Only twice before in European football — the 1972 UEFA Cup and 2008 Champions League — had two English teams contested a final.

But now two will take place in the space of four days as Arsenal and Chelsea square off in a London derby, 4,500km (2,800 miles) from home, in Baku on May 29 before Liverpool and Tottenham clash in Madrid on June 1.

"A full English," ran the headline on the back of British newspaper the *Daily Mirror*, while Spanish sports daily *AS* said: "Football does not know about Brexit."

Liverpool, last year's runners-up to Real Madrid, ended Spain's five-year grip on the continent's top club prize as they shocked Lionel Messi and Barcelona with a stunning 4-0 win at Anfield to overturn a 3-0 first leg deficit.

Tottenham drew inspiration from the Reds to also come back from a 3-0 aggregate deficit as Ajax led 2-0 on the night in Amsterdam before Lucas Moura's second half hat-trick sent Spurs into their first Champions League final.

"We enjoyed a lot watching the tie against Barcelona. They are heroes too and, of course, it is going to be an amazing final between two English teams that for sure we are going to enjoy," said Spurs boss Mauricio Pochettino.

Premier League clubs accumulated revenues of £4.8bn (\$6.2bn) last season, largely thanks to £2.4bn in television revenue, and have spent over



Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino and goalkeeper Hugo Lloris celebrate after defeating Ajax on Wednesday.

£1bn on transfer fees in each of the past three summer windows.

Yet, despite bringing in billions from around the globe, English clubs have been out-thought and out-played at Champions League level over the past decade.

However, the Premier League now have the world's best managers to go with the best players. Jurgen Klopp is in his fourth season at Liverpool

and Pochettino near the end of season five at Spurs. Arsenal's Unai Emery is a Europa League specialist having won the competition three times before at Sevilla and despite being questioned during his first season at Stamford Bridge, Chelsea's Maurizio Sarri is still coveted for jobs in Serie A should he wish to return to Italy.

"An English lesson," wrote Italian sports paper *Gazzetta dello Sport*. "The money flowing and the

best coaches: that's how the Premier League takes it all."

"Here the level is very high. To get to the final in the League Cup we beat Liverpool and Tottenham who are in the Champions League final, and in the final we played against the best team in Europe in my opinion, Man City," said Sarri.

"At the moment the Premier League is the best championship in Europe and as a consequence, in the world."

Chelsea needed a penalty shoot-out to beat Eintracht Frankfurt in their Europa League semi-final, while a Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang hat-trick took the Gunners to a 4-2 win over Valencia for a 7-3 aggregate.

Valencia's defeat ended Spanish participation in both competitions and a run that had seen La Liga sides win nine of the past 10 combined Champions League and Europa League titles.

"It does not surprise me to see the English clubs," said Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane, who led the Spanish giants to three consecutive Champions League titles in 2016, 2017 and 2018.

"The coaches who are in charge of these teams bring something new, their know-how, which is different."

Barcelona, Juventus and Bayern Munich have dominated at home in recent years, but no club has retained the Premier League title since 2009.

The constant grind of England's top six vying every season for just four Champions League places allows nobody to rest on their laurels, on the pitch or off it in the recruitment process.

"The English have the most money and are now spending it sensibly," said German newspaper *Zeit Online*.

"Ten years ago, it started to go downhill, but now, at the very moment they want to leave the EU, they are back."

However, the English revival has not pleased everyone and may only embolden plans to radically change the format of the Champions League from 2024 to avoid prolonged Premier League domination.

"The Premier League has the most money, and when four English teams are in the finals, it is not good for football," said Bayer Leverkusen coach and former Ajax boss Peter Bosz.

KEEPING THE FAITH

Fulham confirm Parker

Reuters
London

Fulham have appointed caretaker boss Scott Parker as their permanent head coach on a two-year contract, the relegated Premier League club said yesterday. Former Fulham player Parker, 38, replaced Claudio Ranieri on an interim basis in February after the Italian failed to turn around a dismal season and last-ed only 16 league games.

Performances improved under Parker, who led them on a three-match winning streak in the league, but the former England international was unable to turn the team's fortunes around fast enough to ensure top-flight safety.

"Scott was brave to accept a very difficult challenge in February when appointed as our caretaker manager," Fulham owner Shahid Khan said in a statement.

"Since that time, day by day, whether in training or on match-day, we've undeniably become a better football club."

"Scott will now have another challenge to face, and that is to return Fulham to the Premier League. I fully believe Scott is more than up to the task."

Fulham spent close to 100mn pounds (\$130mn) last summer ahead of their return to the Premier League but made a poor start under Slavisa Jokanovic, who was sacked and replaced by Ranieri after the club recorded one league win in 12 games.

Parker, who started the season as a first-team coach, said it was time to focus on an immediate return to the top-flight.

"I know how things work, the daily dynamics of team, and where improvements need to be made," Parker, who made 128 appearances for Fulham between 2013 and 2017, told reporters.

"Now, the challenge lies with me to move things forward. Ultimately, success comes from a culture and a desire — that needs to be our foundation. We'll drive a culture here that our fans will recognise."

Fulham host Newcastle United in their final game of the season tomorrow.

FOCUS

Klopp hopeful on Salah return for EPL finale

AFP
Liverpool

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp hopes to have Mohamed Salah, Andy Robertson and Jordan Henderson fit for tomorrow's Premier League finale against Wolverhampton Wanderers as the Reds aim to end a 29-year wait to win the title.

Klopp's men trail Manchester City by one point at the top of the table and need the champions' 13-game winning run to come to an end at Brighton if they are to win the league.

Liverpool are in high spirits after a stunning 4-0 win over Barcelona on Tuesday that booked their place in a second consecutive Champions League final, a match top scorer Salah missed after suffering concussion in the Reds' 3-2 win at Newcastle last weekend.

"Mo looked good around the celebrations after the game, to be honest," said Klopp.

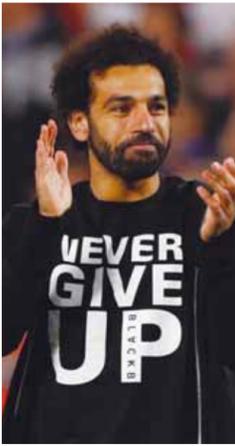
"The day before yesterday and yesterday he was running outside and will be part of training today."

Klopp confirmed Roberto Firmino remains out with a groin tear as Wolves visit Anfield, but is hopeful the Brazilian will be ready for the Madrid final against Tottenham Hotspur on June 1.

Robertson had to be replaced at half-time against Barca and Henderson required a pain-killing injection at the break after taking a kick on the knee late in the first half.

"The famous three words of this week in the dressing room: 'It's only pain,'" added Klopp.

"Unfortunately, Robbo could deal with the pain but only the rest of his body couldn't because



he couldn't really activate the muscle anymore, some nerve hit or whatever. They should be fine (for Sunday)."

Klopp hailed his side's thrashing of a Barca side containing Lionel Messi as "one of the best moments in football history", and he is hoping a crazy week that also saw Spurs come from 3-0 down on aggregate to beat Ajax in the other Champions League semi-final has another twist.

"It was a week of miracles, of big football moments and there could be a big football moment for us on Sunday," added Klopp.

"Most people expected me to sit here today saying now we are out of the Champions League and it is pretty difficult to become champion."

"The only thing we can do is to win the game. In this situation it seems like Wolves and Brighton are only there and that City will win, and we will win, and they will be champion. But there is a game to play."

ADMISSION

United need miracle to mount challenge next season — Solskjaer



Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (R) and assistant coach Mike Phelan.

Reuters
London

Manchester United would need a "miraculous season" to be in the running for the Premier League title next year because of how much their rivals have improved, manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said yesterday. United are sixth in the standings with 66 points, 29 behind leaders Manchester City and 28 behind Liverpool going into their final game of the campaign against relegated Cardiff City tomorrow.

"I think I've been quite honest that challenging for the title next year would be a miraculous season because we're so far behind points-wise," Solskjaer told a news conference. "Next season we have to close that gap, if we manage to get to February or March and still be close that's fantastic. If not this summer will also be about players that can last here for many years."

"We want to get back to where we used to be... it's going to be important we come together from the first day."

The Norwegian said at the club's end-of-season awards on Thursday night that they should invest wisely in the transfer market and nurture youth players to become competitive again.

"We've never been a readymade club. Cristiano Ronaldo was never readymade, Wayne Rooney was never readymade. Loads of the players that come here and developed into the top superstars that they have become," Solskjaer added.

"That's always going to be the model. We'll develop players because I've got the best staff, the best environment and the best supporters because they love players that excite them." Meanwhile, Cardiff manager Neil Warnock is determined to get financial assurances he believes are crucial for the Welsh club to mount a promotion challenge in the Championship next season. After Cardiff's Premier League relegation last weekend, Warnock said he had "no idea" where he would be next season but the 70-year-old has since received the support of club owner Vincent Tan to stay.

"We will need two or three signings

to get us up there and give us a shout because that's what I want to do," told Warnock reporters.

"I think we've arrived as a football club this year. We're a big club now and we've got to think big now."

Meanwhile, Manchester United re-appointed Mike Phelan as their assistant manager yesterday.

The 56-year-old, who was assistant to Sir Alex Ferguson from 2008 to 2013, was brought back to the Premier League club by Solskjaer this season.

"Manchester United has been a huge part of my life since I joined as a player in 1989 and I am delighted to be able to continue that relationship in this key role," said Phelan, who signed a three-year deal.

Solskjaer said Phelan was the first person he contacted to work alongside him when he was initially appointed in December.

"I've been a player under him, his knowledge, experience, demeanour, everyone in the club enjoys speaking to him, talking to him, discussing football with him, players really respect him, they know what he can do and he's worked with the best," he said.

PUNISHMENT

Leicester's Choudhury fined for social media comments



Reuters
London

Leicester City's England under-21 midfielder Hamza Choudhury has been fined 5,000 pounds (\$6,514) by the FA for historical comments made on social media that included racial references.

Choudhury posted a series of tweets in 2013 and 2014, some of which had racial references and one which criticised women's football. He was charged with misconduct by the FA last week.

"Hamza Choudhury has been fined 5,000 pounds and ordered to attend an FA education course by an Independent Regulatory Commission after he admitted to an 'aggravated breach' of FA Rule E3(1)," the FA said in a statement.

"Comments posted by the Leicester player on social media... which included reference to ethnic origin and/or race and/or sexual orientation, were found to be abusive and/or insulting and/or improper and/or brought the game into disrepute."

The 21-year-old was also warned about his future conduct.

Choudhury has made 11 appearances in all competitions for Leicester this season. They are ninth before hosting Chelsea in their final Premier League match of the season tomorrow.

LA LIGA

Barcelona expect frosty return to their home ground

'There are going to be some difficult days ahead, but we have to go again'

AFP
Valencia

Barcelona's recovery begins against Getafe tomorrow but the pain felt from their Champions League collapse at Anfield is likely to get worse before it gets better.

For Getafe, who stand on the brink of their own meteoric upset of finishing in La Liga's top four, the game at Camp Nou is pivotal but for Barca's hurting players, it could feel more like a wake.

"There are going to be some difficult days ahead, but we have to go again," said coach Ernesto Valverde.

A week before, their fans had roared them off, ecstatic after a 3-0 victory over Liverpool put them within touching distance of their first European final since 2015.

When the names of the players, and coach, are read out before kick-off this weekend, the reaction will be instructive, pointing to just how much Tuesday's 4-0 defeat has spoiled an otherwise excellent season that could yet end with a domestic double.

"We have to be really self-critical about what happened," Luis Suarez said. "There are a lot of things to evaluate and to think about."

"We have to apologise for our attitude and realise the criticism is going to rain down on us now. We're really upset, we're hurting a lot. We're humans and we feel the pain."

After Getafe, comes a trip to Eibar for the last league game before the Copa del Rey final against Valencia in Seville on May 25. Win at the Benito Villamarín and there will be celebrations, history made too, but nothing now can make amends.

Like 12 months ago, two trophies will be seen as a failure and, like 12 months ago, there are reports that defeat in the cup



Barcelona's Argentinian striker Lionel Messi (C) skips past Liverpool's Brazilian midfielder Fabinho (L) and Liverpool's German-born Cameroonian defender Joel Matip during the UEFA Champions league semi-final second leg football match between Liverpool and Barcelona at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England on May 7. Messi, however, couldn't do much as Liverpool overturned a 3-0 deficit to qualify for the final.

final will see Valverde sacked.

The way Barcelona respond in these last three games will not save Valverde but, however unfairly, it could condemn him.

Any suggestion the players have stopped believing will entice those anxious for change. "I don't know how this affects my future," Valverde said on Tuesday. "But here we are and the coach has to take responsibility." Patience could wear thinner too with those seen to have underperformed.

After they beat Liverpool, Lionel Messi criticised the fans for their treatment of Philippe Coutinho, who was whistled

off in the second half. But Messi then was speaking from a position of strength.

Valverde made 11 changes for the defeat to Celta Vigo last weekend and could rotate again, sparing his players potential censure from the fans and offering them a longer period of recuperation.

Getafe could be the beneficiaries given Barcelona are the biggest obstacle left between them and the remarkable feat of Champions League qualification. They play at home to 15th-placed Villarreal on the last day.

A weakened Barca would be a blow too for Valencia and Se-

villa, each three points behind Getafe, and with time running out. Valencia's head-to-head means they will finish above Getafe if they can square them on points while Marcelino's side have winnable games left, at home to Alaves tomorrow before ending with a trip to struggling Real Valladolid.

Sevilla have to finish ahead of Getafe on points while also facing a difficult trip to Atletico Madrid and then in-form Athletic Bilbao.

At the other end, two of the three relegation spots have been taken by Rayo Vallecano and Huesca but Girona, Valladolid,

Levante, Villarreal and Celta Vigo could all still finish 18th.

Girona are the current incumbents but host Levante tomorrow. Valladolid travel to Rayo, Villarreal are at home to Eibar and Celta are away at Bilbao.

Fixtures (all Sunday 8.30pm Qatar Time)

Athletic Bilbao v Celta Vigo, Atletico Madrid v Sevilla, Barcelona v Getafe, Real Betis v Huesca, Girona v Levante, Rayo Vallecano v Real Valladolid, Valencia v Alaves, Villarreal v Eibar, Leganes v Espanyol, Real Sociedad v Real Madrid

SPOTLIGHT

Neymar banned for three matches for lashing out at fan

AFP
Paris

Paris Saint-Germain striker Neymar was banned for three matches yesterday with a further two-match ban suspended for lashing out at a fan following the club's shock defeat in the French Cup final.

Announcing the ban, the French football federation said the sanction would go into effect from May 13 allowing the Brazilian superstar to appear for the French champions against Angers in Ligue 1 today.

But he will miss the last two games of the domestic season and the French Champions Trophy pitting PSG against their cup final conquerors winners Rennes in Shenzhen, China in August.

Neymar swung at an abusive opposing fan while climbing the steps to receive his French Cup

final losers medal following the shock defeat to Rennes on penalties last month.

On a nightmare night for PSG, Rennes came back from 2-0 down to 2-2 at the end of regulation time, forcing extra time and penalties. Meanwhile, Neymar has appealed against another ban, this time a three-match Champions League ban imposed by European football's governing body UEFA.

He was punished for an angry outburst at match officials of PSG's last-16 tie against Manchester United in March.

PSG lost following a last-minute penalty award to the Premier League side after a VAR review of a disputed handball appeal.

Neymar did not play in the match through injury but took to social media to call the penalty award a "scandal" and accuse the VAR referees of incompetence.



File photo of PSG star Neymar

FOCUS

'Justice for Stefan' – father sues Malaysian club over lightning death

AFP
Bangkok

Three years after his teenage son was struck by lightning and died, Marco Petrovski has filed lawsuits against Malaysian club Melaka United and the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM), claiming safety failures.

On April 5, 2016, Australian goalkeeper Stefan Petrovski was hit by lightning while training with Melaka United. Less than a month later, the 18-year-old passed away as a result of hypoxic ischemic encephalopathy – brain damage caused by a lack of oxygen during cardiac arrest.

His father, Marco, who met his lawyers in Kuala Lumpur last week, claims Stefan died because the Malaysia Super League club failed to provide adequate medical support and treatment. "Melaka failed to provide comprehensive medical support and insurance coverage for Stefan," said Petrovski. "They failed to provide suitable training facilities for players at all times."

"They failed to ensure that the stadium is equipped with appropriate safety devices to protect players from lightning strikes." "There is also a duty to treat players who have been struck by lightning for 30 minutes with CPR (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation) using a defibrillator," he added.

"Stefan died because he didn't get CPR." Petrovski claims Melaka United were obstructive as he searched for answers in the aftermath, denying him access to the training ground for two-and-a-half weeks. The club declined to comment on the case.

"They finally took me there but always monitoring every step that I made," he said. "I could never have access to any-

body without Melaka's officials and their bodyguards being around me.

"I could never actually sit down with anyone who was on the pitch and ask what really happened."

Petrovski said the club told him it takes 15 minutes to get from the training ground to Melaka's general hospital – a journey which he says takes "45 minutes minimum".

He also disputed the club's assertion that a physio was struck by lightning at the same time, but recovered and gave Stefan CPR.

"One thing that stuck in my head was they said that their physio had also been struck by lightning but that he had miraculously recovered and gave Stefan CPR," he said.

"The doctors on duty the day Stefan was brought in told both his mum and I that he had not received CPR."

Petrovski feels Melaka's claim that Stefan's death was an 'act of God' lacks credibility, as Malaysia is known for lightning strikes, especially in the monsoon season which ends around late March.

He is taking action against FAM because he believes it did not act in the best interests of the players by granting Melaka United a licence. FAM also declined to comment when approached by AFP.

"I went to FAM's own statute for licensing and regulations," said Petrovski. "It states that clubs must provide comprehensive medical support and insurance coverage and provide suitable training facilities."

He added: "I just want justice for Stefan. I want everyone who has done nothing about it to be held accountable and I really would like to see rule changes in Southeast Asia because we need to protect young lives."

BOTTOMLINE

First prominent public sculpture of a female footballer to be unveiled

By Josh Halliday
The Guardian

More than a century after the first women's football match and 110 statues of male players, the first prominent public sculpture of a female footballer will be unveiled next month.

A life-size statue of Lily Parr, the trailblazing, chain-smoking, goal-scoring winger of the 1920s and 30s, will be erected outside Manchester's National Football Museum in June. Parr, who died in 1978 aged 73, scored over 980 goals in her extraordinary 32-year career and was the first woman to feature in the museum's Football Hall of Fame in 2002.

The monument, created by sculptor Hannah Stewart, was commissioned by FA sponsor Mars and will be unveiled before next month's Women's World Cup in France.

"We have come a long way since Lily Parr's days and she deserves recognition as a true pioneer of the sport," said Marzena Bogdanowicz, the head of marketing for



Lily Parr. Photo credit Channel 4

women's football at the FA.

"Women's football is in a very strong place today with the England team helping us to drive participation and interest at every level.

"Lily Parr was the first woman to enter the Football Hall of Fame, an iconic achievement in itself, so it's only fitting that she takes her place alongside other football legends and

becomes the first woman to be celebrated with a statue in her honour."

Parr played for the Dick, Kerr Ladies, a team comprised of workers at a munitions factory in Preston, Lancashire, which became the most successful women's team of all time. Parr netted 34 goals for the club in her first season, aged just 14.

The 6ft (183cm) winger, who reputedly had one of the strongest left-footed shots in the game, represented England in the first women's international game in 1920, when England beat France 4-0 in front of a 15,000-strong crowd.

Female participation in the game surged during the first world war and Parr's career took off at a time when the women's game overshadowed the men's, with millions of fit young men sent to the frontlines to fight.

On Boxing Day 1920, a match between Dick, Kerr and St Helens Ladies at Goodison Park was watched by a crowd of 53,000 with thousands more locked outside. Just a year later, women's football was outlawed by the FA who deemed it "quite unsuitable for females" – a decision that was only reversed in 1969.

IPL

Du Plessis, Watson lead Chennai into record eighth final

Chennai will now take Mumbai in the final in Hyderabad tomorrow

VIAS
Visakhapatnam, India

Chennai Super Kings rode on half centuries from Faf du Plessis and Shane Watson to storm into their eighth Indian Premier League (IPL) final as they beat Delhi Capitals by six wickets in the Qualifier 2 yesterday. Chennai will now take on old foes Mumbai Indians in the final in Hyderabad tomorrow, the fourth time the two teams will be locking horns in the summit clash.

After asking Delhi to bat first, Chennai bowlers put up a superb show to restrict the first time semi-finalists to 147/9. Chasing a modest 148 for victory, openers du Plessis (50; 39 balls; 7x4; 1x6) and Watson (50; 32 balls 3x4; 4x6) were off to a slow start but recovered in time to share a 81-run stand for the opening wicket.

South Africa captain du Plessis was the aggressor early on and once he got out, Watson took over as Delhi bowlers looked hapless. Having notched up his 12th IPL fifty and fourth this season, du Plessis mistimed a pull to Keemo Paul at deep square leg off Trent Boult's bowling while Amit Mishra had Watson caught by Boult at wide long-off.

Suresh Raina (11) was castled by Axar Patel, bringing skipper M S Dhoni to the crease. With 21 needed off 24 balls, it was a cakewalk for the defending champions, although Dhoni (9) got out with two runs required for victory. Dwayne Bravo was at the crease as the yellow army crossed the target with four leg byes with Ambati Rayudu (20 not out) at the other end and an over to spare. Chennai posted 151/4 in 19 overs.

Earlier, Harbhajan Singh (2/31) and Bravo (2/19) used their reservoir of experience to good affect while Deepak Chahar (2/28) continued his rich form with the ball as Delhi never got going despite having Rishabh Pant at the crease for more than an hour.

Ravindra Jadeja (2/23) and Imran Tahir (1/28), their best bowler this season, also returned impressive figures.

It was an uncharacteristic innings from Pant who was initially starved of the strike and then kept at bay by the Chennai bowlers as the 21-year old eventually managed 38 off 25 with the help of two fours and a six.

Pant looked to be taking off when he hit Tahir for a four and six in the 17th over which yielded 14 runs. But Bravo bowled a brilliant 18th over in which he gave away just three runs besides accounting for Keemo Paul (3).

Chahar dismissed Pant in the penultimate over with Bravo taking the catch at long-on before Trent Boult (6 off 3) and Ishant Sharma (10 not out off 3) smashed some lusty blows to take the score close to the 150-run mark.

It all started with Chahar trapping young Prithvi Shaw (5) in front in the third over. Harbhajan then accounted for the in-form Shikhar Dhawan (18), the India southpaw giving a healthy edge to Dhoni who took the catch in his second attempt.

Colin Munro and Shreyas Iyer then tried to steady the ship but just when the former was looking good, Ravindra Jadeja had him caught at deep square-leg by Bravo for 27 off 24 deliveries. Iyer (13) departed soon after, skying a Tahir googly to backward point where Raina completed a good catch. Axar (3) too failed to contribute, holing out to Tahir at third man off Bravo's bowling.

Harbhajan then sent back Sherfane Rutherford (10) and it all looked downhill from there for the first time qualifiers.

BRIEF SCORES

Delhi Capitals: 147/9 in 20 overs (Rishabh Pant 38; Deepak Chahar 2/28, Harbhajan Singh 2/31, Ravindra Jadeja 2/23, Dwayne Bravo 2/19) **lost to Chennai Super Kings: 151/4** (Faf du Plessis 50, Shane Watson 50)



Chennai Super Kings batsmen Faf du Plessis (left) and Shane Watson put on a 81-run opening stand in the Indian Premier League second qualifier match against Delhi Capitals in Visakhapatnam. (AFP)

SPOTLIGHT

Smith hits unbeaten 91 as Australia beat New Zealand

AFF
Brisbane, Australia

Steve Smith plundered an unbeaten 91 and Glenn Maxwell hit 70 yesterday before bad light stopped play, with Australia winning their final warm-up game before leaving for England to defend their World Cup title.

They were handed victory by five wickets courtesy of the Duckworth/Lewis/Stern method after amassing 248 for five off 44 overs in reply to an under-strength New Zealand's 286 for nine from 50 overs. It was another fine knock from former skipper Smith, batting at three, who made his return to Australian colours this week from a year-long ban for ball-tampering.

It followed his 89 not out in the second of the three-match series in Brisbane, which do not count as full internationals, on Wednesday. But David Warner, who was in imperious touch during the Indian Premier League, flopped again in opening the innings, out for two to follow his duck and 39 in the series. Like Smith, Maxwell has been in good touch, pounding 70 off 48 balls to go with the quick-fire 52 he made on Wednesday.

For New Zealand, the unher-

alded Will Young smashed his second century in a row, mastering a top-notch Australian attack led by Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc. The 26-year-old, who is uncapped and not part of New Zealand's World Cup squad, followed up a classy 130 on Wednesday by reaching another ton with a pull for six over mid-wicket. He eventually fell to Marcus Stoinis for 111.

While this week's series was unofficial, his tally of 301 is just shy of the New Zealand record for a three-match one-day series, held by Martin Guptill who scored 330 against England in 2013. Opener George Worker chipped in with 59, while Cummins was the best of the bowlers, taking 4-32 off eight overs.

Cummins and Starc, who took one wicket, were playing together for the first time in three months as the latter returns from injury. Australia won the series 2-1, claiming a close opening game at Allan Border Field by one wicket while their trans-Tasman rivals bounced back to easily take the second by seven wickets.

Australia play two more warm-up matches at Southampton, against England and Sri Lanka, later this month before opening their World Cup campaign against Afghanistan in Bristol on June 1.



Australia's Steve Smith plays pull a shot during a practice match against New Zealand in Brisbane yesterday. (AFP)

FOCUS

Aussies braced for England 'siege' as fans savage Warner

AFF
Brisbane, Australia

Australia coach Justin Langer said his team won't be rattled by a hostile reception at the World Cup as England's Barmy Army gave them a taste of what to expect. The defending champions are on a hot run of one-day form and have been boosted by the return of Steve Smith and David Warner after their one-year bans for ball-tampering.

But a trip to England is never easy, and the visit for the World Cup – followed by an Ashes Test series – is shaping up to be even more challenging than usual after the cheating row. England's fiery Barmy Army supporters rarely need much incentive to get stuck into their arch-rivals and got the ball rolling on Twitter Thursday with a brutal pot shot.

In a taste of what to expect from British crowds, they doctored an image

of Warner's official World Cup player portrait, replacing 'Australia' on the front of his shirt with 'Cheats? They also photo-shopped Mitchell Starc and Nathan Lyon holding sandpaper.

Smith, Warner and Cameron Bancroft were all banned over the scandal last year in Cape Town involving sandpaper to alter the ball. "We're ready for it," Langer said.

"If we're under siege the second we get off the plane, we're ready for it. The World Cup might be a bit different to start off, but certainly once the Ashes kicks off there will be plenty of commentary."

Warner returned to the Australian team this week after prolific form at the Indian Premier League, while Smith stroked an unbeaten 91 in Brisbane against a New Zealand XI yesterday. Langer said Warner "has got this look in his eye at the moment", while praising Smith's innings as a "tutorial in batting".

"It's great for the team," he added. "I

can honestly say I don't think we could be in a better position. It's a bit like facing fast bowling, you worry, worry, worry and once you get out in the middle, it's Ok. The worst time to face fast bowling is in bed the night before. There's been a huge lead-up to this (Smith and Warner's return) and the boys have come in so far quite seamlessly."

Heading into this week's 'unofficial' three-match one-day practice series against a New Zealand XI, Australia had won eight one-dayers on the trot, against India and Pakistan. They won the series 2-1. The games are not counted as full internationals.

"My main concern is we've had a month's break at the end of the Pakistan series," Langer said. "Guys were weary at the end of long taxing summer but we were match-hardened and battle-hardened and had a great sense of confidence. We're working back up towards it. That's why we're having these practice games."

EX-SRI LANKA TEST PLAYERS CHARGED WITH MATCH-FIXING

Colombo: Former Sri Lankan Test players Nuwan Zoysa and Avishka Gunawardene have been charged with match-fixing and given two weeks to respond, the International Cricket Council announced yesterday. The charges against the two cricketers relate to a T10 league played in the United Arab Emirates in December, the ICC said. Zoysa was charged under four counts, including for "being a party to an agreement to influence improperly the result, progress, conduct or other aspects of a match". The ICC slapped two charges against Gunawardene, one for soliciting a match-fixing breach and the other for failing to inform the Anti-Corruption Unit of the ICC.

The charges are the latest in a spate of match-fixing controversies to hit former world champions Sri Lanka in recent months. Three months ago, the ICC banned Sri Lanka's former skipper and ex-chief selector Sanath Jayasuriya from all forms of the game for two years for failing to cooperate with an anti-corruption investigation.

Last month, ex-Sri Lanka fast bowler Dilhara Lokuhettige was suspended over three match corruption accusations. And last year, a match-fixing controversy blew up after a sting operation for a TV documentary. In December, Sri Lanka's Sports minister Harin Fernando announced that the country has been rated as the most corrupt cricket nation by the ICC, cricket's world governing body.

BOTTOMLINE

England batsman Vince eyes World Cup chance

AFF
London

James Vince hopes to capitalise on the banishing of Alex Hales over claims of drug use and force his way into England's World Cup plans. The in-form Hampshire batsman could be involved in the 50-over showpiece after Hales was dramatically dropped from all England squads due to reported use of recrea-

tional drugs. The 28-year-old Vince has the remaining four matches of England's one-day international series against Pakistan to stake his claim. "If he was here I don't think I'd be here now," Vince said of Hales. "I'm not going to say too much on his situation but it has given me an opportunity. It's great to be back among the lads and I want to push my case to get into that World Cup squad."

England have until May 23 to finalise their squad for the home tournament,

with their opening match against South Africa taking place seven days later at the Oval. Vince has already endured frustration in his quest to impress national selector Ed Smith and head coach Trevor Bayliss after the five-match series opener was curtailed by rain on Wednesday.

Pakistan reached 80-2 in the 19 overs that were possible, with Vince and fellow fringe player Joe Denly denied a chance to impress. Pace bowler Jofra Archer, however, served further no-

tice of his World Cup credentials with a wicket and two maiden overs, and Vince admits competition for places is hotting up.

"Jofra's not in it (the World Cup squad) at the moment so I guess there are a few options and a few different balances to the side," said Vince. "I'm trying not to think about it too much and if and when I do get an opportunity in this series, (I will) try to push my case. They've played some magnificent cricket and got to number one in

the world so it's been a tough team to break into."

With opener Jason Roy set to be fit after overcoming a back spasm, Vince is unsure whether he will be involved in the second match of the series today and is considering turning out for his county. And he said he was unsure how much he would be involved in the rest of the series against Pakistan. "I guess it depends on what they're thinking for the World Cup, whether they want to give me game time," he said.

NBA

Trail Blazers and Sixers survive to force game sevens

'I play to win. Right now, this is what I have to do in order to give us a great chance at winning'



Jimmy Butler (left) of the Philadelphia 76ers dribbles the ball against Danny Green of the Toronto Raptors in the first quarter of game six in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. (AFP)

AFP
Los Angeles

The Philadelphia 76ers and Portland Trail Blazers both forced game sevens in their NBA second round playoff series on Thursday with a pair of bounce-back wins to stave off elimination.

Jimmy Butler scored 25 points while Ben Simmons and Joel Embiid also had spirited performances as the 76ers survived to fight another day with a 112-101 win over the Toronto Raptors in game six.

Butler also had six rebounds and Embiid finished with 17 points and 12 rebounds for the Sixers, who kept their season alive by squaring the best-of-seven Eastern Conference second round series at 3-3.

"I play to win," Butler said. "Right now, this is what I have to do in order to give us a great chance at winning."

Simmons rebounded to deliver 21 points after struggling mightily in game five with just seven points and five turnovers. His game six total was more than his combined points total of games five and four.

"It was amazing focus. Everybody was locked in," Simmons said. "We knew what was at stake."

Franchise cornerstone Embiid, who was listed as a probable starter due to a sore knee, also got back on track after making eight turnovers in game five.

"I knew I had to come in with high spirits," Embiid said.

"If I've got to play 45 minutes and push myself out there, that's what I'll do."

The winner-take-all con-

test will be Sunday in Toronto with the victor advancing to face the top-seeded Milwaukee Bucks. Game one of the Eastern Conference finals is slated for Wednesday in Milwaukee.

Tobias Harris contributed 16 points, and JJ Redick and Mike Scott had 11 each for the third-seeded Sixers, who haven't advanced to the Eastern Conference finals since 2001, when they ousted the Bucks in seven games.

Kawhi Leonard led the second-seeded Raptors with 29 points and 12 rebounds. Pascal Siakam added 21 points, and Kyle Lowry had 13.

Leonard has scored at least 20 points in eight straight playoff contests.

Elsewhere, Damian Lillard scored 17 of his 32 points in the third quarter, and the Trail Blazers forced game seven in

their series with Denver with a 119-108 win.

SECOND HALF SURGE

Denver went in front by as much as 10 points in the first half before getting blasted by the Trail Blazers in the second half.

CJ McCollum added 30 points, and Rodney Hood came off the bench to score a career playoff high 25 for Portland, who haven't advanced to the NBA final four in 19 years.

Nikola Jokic led the Nuggets with 29 points and 12 rebounds, while Jamal Murray added 24 points and 10 rebounds. Lillard put the Blazers ahead to stay with a three-pointer with 4:18 remaining in the third period.

Portland's Hood hit two key baskets when the Nuggets threatened early in the fourth, helping the Trail Blazers send the series back to Denver for a

showdown on Sunday. "It is unfortunate but we have been here before," said Nuggets coach Mike Malone.

"Now we go home and we have best home court advantage in the NBA and we are going to try to take advantage of that and close it out."

The winner of tomorrow's game will face the winner of the series between the Golden State Warriors and the Houston Rockets. The defending NBA champion Warriors have a 3-2 advantage in the series after a 104-99 victory on Wednesday. Game six is Friday in Houston.

RESULTS

Eastern Conference
Philadelphia 112 Toronto 101 (Series tied 3-3)
Western Conference
Portland 119 Denver 108 (Series tied 3-3)

SPOTLIGHT

Vogel talks with Los Angeles Lakers

By Broderick Turner
Los Angeles Times

The Los Angeles Lakers are moving fast to try to fill their head-coaching vacancy, interviewing former Orlando Magic and Indiana Pacers coach Frank Vogel on Thursday, according to people not authorized to speak publicly on the matter.

In an event-filled Wednesday during which negotiations between the Lakers and former Cleveland Cavaliers coach Tyrone Lue reached an impasse, the Lakers quickly targeted Vogel as a candidate, and he had a meeting at the team's practice facility in El Segundo.

After missing the playoffs for the last six consecutive seasons, the Lakers are hoping to land a coach — their fifth in the last eight seasons — who can take the franchise back to the postseason.

Vogel, 45, had his best moments as coach of the Pacers for five-plus seasons, leading them to the playoffs five out of the six seasons he was there, including a postseason berth when he took over as the interim coach in 2011.

If past interviews with candidates are an indicator, Vogel probably met with Lakers owner Jeanie Buss, general manager Rob Pelinka, co-owners Joey Buss (who runs the Lakers' G League South Bay Lakers team) and Jesse Buss (the Lakers' assistant general manager and director of scouting), chief operating officer Tim Harris, director of special projects Linda Rambis and senior adviser Kurt Rambis.

Vogel's teams are known for their strong play on defense, having ranked in the top five in the league during his tenure with the Pacers. Under Vogel's guidance, Indiana advanced to the Eastern Conference finals in 2013 and 2014 before losing to the LeBron James-led Miami Heat. Vogel spent two seasons with the Magic before being fired

after the 2018 season.

He has worked for the Lakers before as an advance scout from 2005-06. Vogel had been a candidate to be the associate head coach on Lue's staff.

The New Jersey native, who transferred to Kentucky after starting for two seasons at Division III Juanita College, has a record of 304-291 in seven-plus seasons as an NBA coach.

Vogel's coaching career began in 2001 when he joined the Boston Celtics' staff as an assistant under coach Jim O'Brien.

After three seasons with the Celtics, Vogel followed O'Brien to the Philadelphia 76ers for one season and then to the Pacers in 2007.

The Lakers' coaching position has been open since April 12, when the Lakers and Luke Walton mutually agreed to part ways. Walton was hired as coach of the Sacramento Kings a few days later.

Other candidates include former Atlanta Hawks and New York Knicks coach Mike Woodson and former Memphis Grizzlies and Brooklyn Nets coach Lionel Hollins.

The team also will continue to consider Miami Heat assistant Juwan Howard and former Brooklyn Nets and Milwaukee Bucks coach Jason Kidd, both of whom were interviewed in April.

Lue and former New Orleans Pelicans coach Monty Williams were the front-runners for the job. After two rounds of interviews in late April, neither was offered a contract. Williams agreed to become coach of the Phoenix Suns on May 3.

The Lakers opened negotiations with Lue on Friday. The Lakers and the former Cavaliers coach, who went to three consecutive NBA Finals with James and brought Cleveland its first pro sports championship in 50 years in 2016, reached an impasse Wednesday over the contract offer, which was three years and \$18 million.



Orlando Magic head coach Frank Vogel on the sidelines against the Milwaukee Bucks at the Amway Center in Orlando on March 14, 2018. (Orlando Sentinel/TNS)

NHL

Boston power play strikes as Bruins seize game one

AFP
Washington

Patrice Bergeron and Marcus Johansson scored 28 seconds apart on the powerplay as the Boston Bruins defeated the visiting Carolina Hurricanes in the opening game of their Eastern Conference NHL final on Thursday.

Goaltender Tuukka Rask stopped 29 shots for the Bruins who stretched their winning streak to four straight games and snapped Carolina's at six.

The Bruins are assured of home ice advantage throughout the playoffs so game two of the best-of-seven series is Sunday in Boston.

Boston lost three of their first five games to open their first-round series against Toronto, but key performers like Rask and Czech forward David Pastrnak appeared to have hit their stride as the Bruins' run goes deeper into the postseason.

"We earned home ice by playing well all year," said forward Chris Wagner, who had a goal. "We didn't want to come out with our C or D game in game one."

The Bruins came back from a 2-1 series deficit against the Columbus Blue Jackets on their way to advancing to a third conference final this decade. In the deciding game six, Rask carried the team with a 39-save shutout while Pastrnak led the resurgence in game five with two goals.

Sebastian Aho and Greg McKegg scored for Carolina on Thursday, and Petr Mrazek stopped 23 shots in his return from a two-game absence following a lower-body injury.

The Hurricanes took a 2-1 lead into the third period before they fell apart and took a string of penalties.

"They compete and they are physical all over (the) ice but maybe to a fault, so we got to take advantage of the powerplays," said Wagner.

Jordan Staal boarded Wagner to lead to Johansson's score, and

Dougie Hamilton roughed Joakim Nordstrom ahead of Bergeron's go-ahead tally.

The Hurricanes pulled Mrazek with the score 3-2 and 2:38 remaining, but Charlie Boyle and Wagner put the game away for Boston with empty-netters 11 seconds apart.

Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour refused after the game to play the referee card and blame poor officiating for their loss.

"There were penalties both ways that were called and not called. There is no point in blaming the officiating," Brind'Amour said. "We took penalties and we need to kill them."

"Whether they are good or bad, whether we thought there were some that should or shouldn't have been called, that's going to happen every night."

The Bruins were without defenseman Charlie McAvoy, who was suspended one game as the result of an illegal check to the head of Columbus forward Josh Anderson in Monday's game six.



Patrice Bergeron of the Boston Bruins celebrates with teammates after scoring a goal during the third period against the Carolina Hurricanes in game one of the Eastern Conference final of the 2019 NHL Stanley Cup playoffs at TD Garden in Boston. (Getty Images/AFP)

MLB

Pujols gets RBI No. 2,000 as Angels rout Detroit Tigers

‘There are some 20,000 players who have played this game and to be the [fourth] one on that list ... that’s amazing. I thank God for the ability and the talent. I thank my family and my wife and kids, my coaching staff, the players. You don’t accomplish it by yourself’

Reuters
New York

Albert Pujols notched the 2,000th RBI of his career with a solo homer, Tommy La Stella homered twice and drove in four runs and the visiting Los Angeles Angels coasted to a 13-0 victory over the Detroit Tigers on Thursday.

Pujols achieved his milestone with a two-out blast in the third inning. Hank Aaron (2,297) and Alex Rodriguez (2,086) are officially the only other players in the modern era with more runs batted in. Some sources also credit Babe Ruth (2,214) and Cap Anson (2,075) with crossing the 2,000-RBI mark, but a portion of those totals came before the stat was made official in 1920.

“There are some 20,000 players who have played this game and to be the [fourth] one on that list ... that’s amazing,” Pujols said.

“I thank God for the ability and the talent. I thank my family and my wife and kids, my coaching staff, the players. You don’t accomplish it by yourself. You have to have guys on base and get the opportunity to drive them in. Look at that number. That’s a big number.”

Shohei Ohtani collected his first two hits this season. Ohtani returned to the lineup in the series opener on Tuesday after recovering well enough from Tommy John surgery to swing a bat without restrictions. He went hitless in the first two games of the series.

Felix Pena (2-1), who entered the game in the second inning, tossed seven innings of scoreless relief to get the victory. He allowed only three hits, walked none and struck out seven. Justin Bour and Kole Calhoun also homered. Zack Cozart drove in two runs, and Calhoun scored three runs.

Tigers left-hander Ryan Carpenter (0-1), who was recalled from Triple-A Toledo, gave up six runs on eight hits in five innings. The Angels scored two runs in the first inning. After the first two batters reached, Ohtani singled home the first run. The second came in on Andrelton Simmons’ double-play grounder.

Los Angeles made it 5-0 in the second. Cozart hit a sacrifice fly before La Stella drilled a two-run shot to right field.

Pujols’ long ball upped the lead to 6-0, and Calhoun hit a solo homer in the sixth. La Stella led off the seventh with his second homer of the game. David Fletcher then tripled, and Mike Trout brought him in with a sacrifice fly.

ROCKIES HANG ON TO TOP GIANTS 12-11 IN SNOW

Nolan Arenado, Mark Reynolds and Ian Desmond homered, Chris Iannetta had a tiebreaking double in the sixth inning, and the Colorado Rockies held on to beat the San Francisco Giants 12-11 in snowy Denver on Thursday afternoon.

Arenado had three hits and reached base five times, and Wade Davis picked up



Los Angeles Angels first baseman Albert Pujols (right) is congratulated by third base coach Mike Gallego after hitting a home run for his 2000th RBI in the third inning against the Detroit Tigers at Comerica Park. **PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports**

RESULTS

| | | |
|-----------|-------|-----------|
| Angels | 13-0 | Tigers |
| Rockies | 12-11 | Giants |
| Cardinals | 17-4 | Pirates |
| Yankees | 3-1 | Mariners |
| Cubs | 4-1 | Marlins |
| D’backs | 3-2 | Braves |
| Nationals | 6-0 | Dodgers |
| Indians | 5-0 | White Sox |
| Astros | 4-2 | Rangers |
| Reds | 3-0 | A’s |

his sixth save after giving up two runs in the ninth. Tyler Austin went deep twice and drove in six runs for the Giants.

The game was played in cold, raw weather with the temperature 39 degrees at game time. Snow fell in the first inning.

It was tied 8-8 midway through the sixth when the Rockies struck for three runs against the San Francisco bullpen. Raimel Tapia doubled off of Tyler Beede (0-1), and Mark Melancon walked Desmond.

Iannetta followed with a two-run double, and pinch hitter Daniel Murphy drove him in with a ground-ball single that went off first baseman Austin’s glove.

The Giants got a run in the eighth on a double by Stephen Vogt, but Trevor Story got the run back with an RBI single in the bottom half. In the ninth, Brandon Crawford had an RBI double, and Joe Panik drove him in with a single. Vogt struck out to end it.

Arenado hit a two-run homer, his 10th, in the first, and Reynolds made it 3-0 on the next pitch with his fourth home run of the season.

In the second inning, Reynolds had a

two-run double to left-centre field, and Desmond went deep for his fourth homer of the season to make it 7-0. The Giants clawed their way back to make it a game. Austin hit a two-run homer, his first of the season, with one out in the third. The Giants scored three more in the fourth inning on two Colorado errors among a double and a single, making it 7-5. Arenado drove in another run with a two-out single to centre in the fifth inning off Beede. Austin wiped out the lead with a two-out, three-run homer off reliever Bryan Shaw in the sixth inning.

Shaw (2-0) got the win despite walking two and giving up the home run.

Colorado starter Kyle Freeland went five innings, allowing five runs (three earned) on four hits and four walks. Giants starter Derek Holland was charged with seven runs on seven hits and four walks in 2 2/3 innings.

FOCUS

Seahawks terminate contracts of Chancellor, Baldwin

By Bob Condotta
The Seattle Times

The Seahawks announced on Thursday that the team has terminated the contracts of two of the most iconic players of the Pete Carroll era - safety Kam Chancellor and receiver Doug Baldwin.

The contracts were each terminated with the designation that they had failed a physical. “The Seahawks have made the difficult decision to terminate/failed physical Doug Baldwin and Kam Chancellor,” Seahawks general manager John Schneider said in a statement released by the team on Thursday.

“These are two of the most iconic players in franchise history and both were instrumental in establishing our championship culture, great examples of competitiveness and leadership on the field and in the community. These legendary players will always be a part of our Seahawks family.”

The move was no surprise with Chancellor as he did not play last season and had essentially announced his retirement via social media last July 1, later revealing that he is suffering from spinal stenosis, an injury suffered in a game at Arizona on Nov 9, 2017.

Baldwin, meanwhile, dealt with knee, shoulder and sports

hernia injuries in 2018 and has had surgeries on each in the offseason.

The team had made it clear Baldwin was considering retiring, with coach Pete Carroll saying last Friday that “I was with him today in the training room. He’s working out and working hard, trying to get himself right. It’s a big challenge and you know, he’s got a lot to overcome.”

Baldwin had no more guaranteed money in his contract but by being cut will not have to pay back any of the \$7 million in bonus money received in a four-year deal he signed in 2016. He will end up not playing the final two seasons of that contract, years in which he would have made \$9.25 and \$10.25 million.

Chancellor had injury guarantees paying him \$5.2 million for 2019. But the Seahawks are now not on the hook for any more money with Chancellor, whose contract also went through the 2020 season.

The two moves come as Seattle continues to reconfigure its roster, and will open up some additional cap space to make more moves going forward. The moves also mean there are just three players left on the roster from the team that won the Super Bowl following the 2013 season - quarterback Russell Wilson and linebackers Bobby Wagner and KJ Wright.



Seahawks receiver Doug Baldwin.

Bills backup QB Anderson retires

Backup quarterback Derek Anderson, who signed with the Buffalo Bills last October, has decided to retire from the NFL, the team announced on Thursday.

“Derek let me know a few weeks back that he wasn’t sure if he could be committed (for the season) and wanted to still think about it,” Bills general manager Brandon Beane said in a statement. “So I knew going into the draft that this was something that could potentially happen. But it wasn’t definite. We talked this week and he let me know today that he is going to retire.”

Anderson, 36, a sixth-round pick of the Baltimore Ravens in 2005 who began his NFL career with the Cleveland Browns in 2006, appeared in

78 career games, completing 909 of 1,674 passes for 10,878 yards with 60 touchdowns and 64 interceptions.

He led the Browns to a 10-5 record in 2007 - making the Pro Bowl for the only time in his career - then after two more seasons with the Browns, played for the Arizona Cardinals (2010) and Carolina Panthers (2011-17) before joining the Bills.

Last season, he played in only two games with Buffalo (both starts) and completed 42 of 70 passes for 465 yards with no touchdowns and four interceptions.

Among the remaining Bills quarterbacks are starter Josh Allen and backups Matt Barkley and Tyree Jackson, an undrafted free agent.

NFL

Dolphins sign Howard to biggest deal for cornerback

By Omar Kelly
Sun Sentinel

The Miami Dolphins have signed cornerback Xavien Howard to a five-year extension that will make him the NFL’s highest paid cornerback.

According to a league source, Howard, who had been pushing for an extension all offseason, received a five-year extension that will pay him \$76.5 million. The deal features \$46 million in guaranteed money, and makes him the team’s highest paid player.

Howard’s deal exceeds the \$75 million contract Josh Norman got from Washington back in 2016. That deal only featured \$36.5 million in fully guaranteed money, but that was the highest amount of fully guaranteed salary an NFL team paid a cornerback before Howard. Norman

did receive a total guarantee of \$50 million when injury was factored in.

How much of Howard’s \$46 million in guaranteed money is fully guaranteed wasn’t clarified, but he’ll average more than \$15 million a season for the first three seasons of the deal.

Howard, who has 11 interceptions and 25 pass breakups in 28 games the past two seasons, made his first Pro Bowl last season despite missing the season’s final four games because of a knee injury.

The Dolphins view Howard, a former Baylor standout the team selected in the second round of the 2016 NFL draft, as a cornerstone piece they intend to build the new hybrid defense around. Last season Howard was used to shadow every opponent’s best receiver. Despite doing so he contributed 35 tackles, 12 pass deflections, and was tied for the league lead with seven intercep-

tions. The Dolphins are hopeful that the 25-year-old will continue to improve, which could turn him into the best cornerback the franchise has had since Brent Grimes.

The cornerback market was slow during 2019 free agency, but Washington gave strong safety Landon Collins a six-year contract worth \$84 million, with \$44.5 million in guarantees and \$26 million guaranteed at signing. That deal helped set the framework for what Howard received from Miami to avoid getting hit with the franchise tag next offseason.

Getting a deal done with Howard was viewed as the franchise’s top priority this offseason, and now that it’s done Miami can turn its attention to continuing to strength the 2019 roster.

The Dolphins signed offensive tackle Jordan Mills, who started every game for the Buffalo Bills

in 2015-18, to a one-year, worth \$3 million on Thursday, and it’s possible that the Dolphins could pass a few more veterans to the roster before training camp begins late July.

With Howard locked up cornerback seems to be less of a need because Miami has Bobby McCain, who has primarily served as the Dolphins nickel cornerback the past four years, Eric Rowe, a free agent addition, Cordrea Tankersley, who is recovering from a torn ACL he suffered last November, and Torrey McTyer competing for playing time. Miami could also use Min-kah Fitzpatrick, the team’s 2018 first-round pick, at cornerback much like they did last season.

The Dolphins plan to run a hybrid scheme that utilizes both a 3-4 and 4-3 front, and want a roster full of interchangeable players who can fill many roles. Howard certainly fits that mould.



Miami Dolphins’ Xavien Howard (left) intercepts a pass against the Buffalo Bills at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens on December 2, 2018. **(Miami Herald/TNS)**

GOLF

Tiger takes aim at 16th major, PGA win mark at Bethpage

Woods will arrive at the Long Island three major wins shy of the record 18 set by Nicklaus and one win shy of the US PGA overall win mark of 82 set by Snead.

AFP
Bethpage, United States

Tiger Woods chases more golf history in next week's 101st PGA Championship at Bethpage Black, the same public course where the 15-time major winner captured the 2002 US Open. The 43-year-old American superstar completed one of the great comebacks in sports history last month with a dramatic victory at the Masters for his fifth green jacket and first major triumph since the 2008 US Open. "One of the biggest wins I've ever had for sure," Woods said. "It's something I will never, ever forget."

An 11-year major drought saw him endure an infamous sex scandal as well as years of knee and back injuries that left him uncertain of a normal life until a 2017 spinal fusion operation enabled him to return to golf at an elite level.

"You could compare it to maybe the biggest, if not one of the biggest, moments in the history of golf," said 20th-ranked Webb Simpson. "From where he was, not knowing if he would ever play again. To come from feeling that way to winning the Masters is pretty amazing."

Sixth-ranked Woods will arrive at the Long Island layout three major wins shy of the career record 18 set by Jack Nicklaus and one win shy of the US PGA overall win mark of 82 set by Sam Snead. "For me to be competing against him when he's coming back is a lot of fun," top-ranked Masters co-runner-up Dustin Johnson said. "He's still a great player. I grew up watching him and kind of idolizing him so to get to play against him, it has been great."

Woods, who had never before won a major when trailing after 54 holes, has electrified the sports world much as he did by winning his first major at the 1997 Masters, accepting the Presidential Medal of Freedom this week at the White House.

Woods nearly pulled off his first comeback major win last year. He was a contender at the British Open and battled down the back nine in the 100th PGA at Bellerive before being bested by Brooks Koepka, the two-time US Open champion who hopes to defend his PGA crown at Bethpage. "My last three major championships have been pretty good," Woods



Tiger Woods completed one of the great comebacks in sports history last month with a dramatic victory at the Masters for his fifth green jacket and first major triumph since the 2008 US Open. (AFP)

said. "So that in itself gives me a lot of confidence going down the road."

In addition to matching Snead's all-time tour win mark, Woods would equal the record five PGA Championship titles by Nicklaus and Walter Hagen with a win. He would also be halfway to a calendar year Grand Slam, the PGA having shifted to May for the first time since 1949 in a revamped world golf calendar.

Woods won the first two majors of 2002 at the Masters and US Open at Bethpage, defeating Phil Mickelson by three shots. The feat hadn't been done since Nicklaus managed it 30 years earlier.

Only five men have ever done it and only Ben Hogan has done it twice. Woods

would also be the 10th-oldest major champion by winning at Bethpage, two days beyond Ted Ray at the 1920 US Open at 43 years, four months and 16 days.

"Everyone works on their bodies, besides their game. Things have come a long way," Woods said. "You're just seeing guys that are taking care of their bodies a lot better and able to play longer."

Formidable Bethpage will offer tricky rough and lightning-quick greens, living up to the sign at its first tee — "The Black course is an extremely difficult course which we recommend only for highly skilled golfers."

Woods, whose \$20mn luxury yacht Privacy is docked at nearby Oyster Bay,

was the only player under par in 2002 and 2009 winner Lucas Glover was among only five players under par in a rain-soaked week. Woods will have plenty of top rivals, including Players Championship winner Rory McIlroy, the 2012 and 2014 PGA winner from Northern Ireland who was in the Masters hunt.

Koepka, another Masters co-runner-up, could make some history of his own. If he wins at Bethpage, he'll be the first golfer to own concurrent back-to-back major titles. American Jordan Spieth, who is struggling this season, can complete a career Grand Slam by winning the PGA title. He hasn't won since the 2017 British Open.

SPOTLIGHT

Koepka takes first round lead in Texas in PGA tune-up

AFP
Los Angeles

Brooks Koepka warmed up for his defence of next week's PGA Championship with an opening round six-under-par 65 at the AT&T Byron Nelson in Dallas, Texas, on Thursday. Koepka, who will be looking to add a fourth major to his resume at Bethpage Black in New York next week, carded eight birdies and two bogeys to finish the day two off the early pace.

The 29-year-old's round might have been better had it not been for two bogeys on the back nine which were the only blemishes on an otherwise impressive day's work at Trinity Forest Golf Club. "The last few weeks I've been even impressed with myself and how well I'm striking it," Koepka said.

"Controlling it nice and then from there just try to feel like you see some putts go in the hole. I think it's important to kind of feel like the hole is opening up with a major. Obviously the goal is to win (here) but if you don't, you want to leave feeling good for next week."

Koepka, who teed off on the 10th hole, made a 41-foot birdie putt on the 18th before draining a 19-foot effort at the par-three

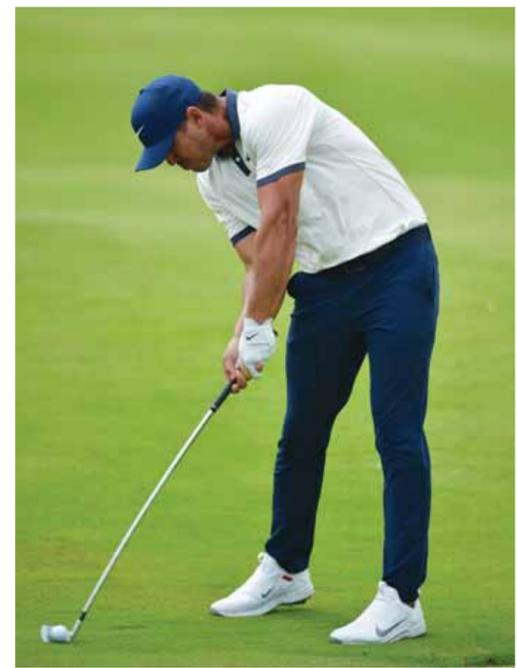
second hole. With wet conditions making for low scoring on a soft course, Koepka was one of nine players tied for fourth on six under, a group which included Sweden's Jonas Blixt, South Korea's Kang Sung-ho and Australia's Matt Jones.

Denny McCarthy of the United States posted the day's lowest score, taking a one-shot lead with an eight-under-par 63. McCarthy started slowly, and drifted out to two over for the day after a double-bogey six on the par-four fourth.

But the 26-year-old from Maryland surged up the leaderboard with five straight birdies from the sixth hole onwards. Further birdies followed on the 12th, 13th and 14th before back-to-back birdies on 16 and 17 took him to eight under.

McCarthy attributed his remarkable run of 10 birdies over the final 13 holes to a relaxed approach after a nervous start. "I came out with a mindset that I wanted to be aggressive, and I wasn't," McCarthy said. "After that I just told myself that I was going to play carefree today, have fun with it and let it go, and I did it. I'm pretty proud of myself for just being able to let my mind go after a double-bogey like that."

Tyler Duncan and Tom Hoge were tied for second after posting seven-under-par 64s.



Brooks Koepka of USA plays a shot on the ninth hole during the first round of the Byron Nelson Open in Dallas, Texas. (AFP)

BOXING

Wilder says Fury ducking rematch

AFP
Los Angeles

Deontay Wilder believes British heavyweight Tyson Fury is avoiding a rematch with him after being concussed in their first bruising encounter in Los Angeles last year. Speaking to journalists on a conference call Thursday ahead of his May 18 title defense against Dominic Breazeale in New York, Wilder insisted he would have been happy to fight Fury again after last December's draw at the Staples Center.

Hopes of a rematch effectively ended when Fury signed a multi-fight deal with US broadcaster ESPN, complicating negotiations for a possible return against unbeaten World Boxing Council champion Wilder. Fury's first fight since his battle with Wilder will instead be against lightly regarded German heavyweight Tom Schwarz in Las Vegas on June 15. Wilder said while a rematch with Fury would happen eventually, he believes the self-styled "Gypsy King" is ducking him. "Fury knows his real reason for not fighting me," Wilder said. "That's why he signed the contract with ESPN. He didn't want that fight."

Fury was leading on the scorecards before being knocked to the canvas by Wilder in the 12th round of their Los Angeles bout. That knockdown effectively

saved Wilder from defeat as he escaped with a draw.

But Wilder said Fury would have taken him on again immediately if he believed he could win the rematch.

"I whooped Fury, I was the aggressor," Wilder said. "The highlight of the first fight was me knocking Fury down. Tyson don't want me; he knows I gave him a concussion. I understand why he made the decision he did. I hurt Tyson Fury very badly. I gave him a concussion. This man had memory loss. And that's not healthy. So if he needs a warm-up or a tune-up to get some of his marbles back, go do it. Take as many warm-ups as you need."

"He says he's got three more fights. And those fights will lead up to me. And this time I'm going to finish it. So go get healthy. Because I want the best Tyson Fury when the time comes."

While Wilder's epic battle with Fury had reignited interest in the heavyweight division, fans have grown frustrated by the failure of the three top protagonists — Wilder, Fury and Anthony Joshua — to fight this year.

Wilder, however, called for fans to be patient. "The excitement is back in the heavyweight division," he said. "The fire is lit. I ask people to be patient. It will all work together and get the main fight you want to see. Everyone's still in the discussion. The fans of boxing, I say, I the big fights will happen."

CYCLING

Yates, Dumoulin back to finish job at Giro d'Italia

AFP
Bologna

Simon Yates and Tom Dumoulin both have a point to prove as they return to this year's Giro d'Italia which starts in Bologna today after coming so close last year. Mitchelton-Scott rider Yates dominated the 2018 edition, which started in Israel, before collapsing two days before the finish as compatriot Chris Froome became the first British winner of the three-week race.

Sunweb's Dumoulin — the 2017 winner — finished runner-up just 46 seconds behind Froome, who will not be defending his title as he focuses on winning a fifth Tour de France this summer. Two-time former winner Vincenzo Nibali and Slovenian Primoz Roglic are also among the challengers in the 102nd edition which stays in Italy, apart from one stage into San Marino, a micro state within Italian territory.

"I'm going back to try to finish it," warned Yates, who went on to win his first major race at the Tour of Spain last year. "Only a few guys in the field have won a grand tour and I'm one, so it's normal to go in as a favourite."

Yates had built a lead of almost a minute with four days to go. Then the race returned to the mountains for three stages. He faltered on the first, crumbled on the second and faded on the third to finish 21st, more than an hour-and-a-quarter behind Froome. "I felt I was close last year but ran out of gas," he said.

Yates arrives in Bologna having won a stage at the Ruta del Sol and the first trial of his career at Paris-Nice in March. There are three time-trials, a strength of the two previous winners Froome and Dumoulin, but two of those finish uphill.



Britain's Simon Yates of Team Mitchelton-Scott at the team presentation ceremony for the 2019 Giro d'Italia, the cycling Tour of Italy, in Bologna yesterday. (AFP)

Mitchelton have rung the changes to back up 26-year-old Yates in a race with seven summit finishes. Colombian Esteban Chaves, Dane Christopher Juul-Jensen and Spaniard Mikel Nieve, are the only survivors from last year's team.

Dumoulin, 28, and Nibali, 34, are the only former winners in the field. Dutch-

man Dumoulin has made the Giro his priority, insisting: "Hopefully there is a big win waiting for me this year. I'll see then for the Tour de France."

Nibali, now riding for the Bahrain team, will have his younger brother Antonio, 26, alongside him for the first time. The 2013 and 2016 winner will be competing

in the event for the eighth time, two years after he last competed and finished third. "I miss winning," said Nibali. "My last victory was too long ago (the 2018 Milan-San Remo). Raising the arms up in the air is the nicest thing for an athlete. Being superstitious, I don't want to say more than that I'm here for a nice result."

Riders will have to wait until the 13th stage to hit the mountains with the most fearsome climbs grouped into four days with the summits of Gavia and Mortirolo ascended on May 28. The climbers will again have a chance to upset the hierarchy at the exit of the Dolomites, on the eve of the finish on June 2 in Verona's Roman amphitheatre.

"The Giro looks hard on paper but I like the route," said Roglic, who warmed up with a win at the Tour de Romandie. The Slovenian, fourth of the Tour de France 2018, has the profile of troublemaker. "I can do well on all terrains," said the 29-year-old Team Jumbo rider.

"I feel more tension than before my first Giro three years ago, but it's normal and we also need to enjoy, have fun, and like it, otherwise a three-week race is too long and too hard for everyone."

Italy's Davide Formolo is also carrying home hopes after his second in the Liege-Bastogne-Liege, with podium contenders also including Colombian Miguel Angel Lopez, Spaniard Miguel Landa and Ecuadorian Richard Carapaz.

There are also young hopefuls with Britain's Tao Geoghegan Hart and Russian Pavel Sivakov of Team Ineos, formerly Team Sky, who said competing "without any pressure" could create some surprises.

The first challenge of this year's adventure for the 176 riders from 22 teams will be the 8.2km time-trial up to the Sanctuary of the Madonna di San Luca, overlooking Bologna in northeast Italy.

MADRID OPEN

Thiem ends Federer's clay court return

Halep closes in on a return to No. 1 after beating Bencic to advance to the women's final

AFP
Madrid

Dominic Thiem saved two match points and ended the first chapter of Roger Federer's return to clay court tennis with a come-from-behind 3-6, 7-6 (13/11), 6-4 win and reach the Madrid Open semi-finals yesterday.

The 37-year-old Swiss had returned this week to the surface for the first time in three years — his last clay court match was a loss to Thiem in Rome in 2016. Thiem, the 2018 Roland Garros runner-up and winner of the Barcelona title last month, prevailed in two hours 10 minutes having saved two match points in a 15-minute second set tie-break.

He will today face world number one and top seed Novak Djokovic, who advanced on a walkover when opponent Marin Cilic withdrew with a stomach virus. Federer said he was happy to have made his clay court comeback. "I feel very good about my game. I thought I had some good matches here," the 20-time Grand Slam champion said. "I feel good on the clay right now."

Federer now has the option to take up a wild card being held for him next week in Rome. Otherwise, his next clay event will be the French Open where he last played in 2015. "The match was so close," said Austrian fifth seed Thiem who had also defeated Federer in the Indian Wells final in March.

"I was really lucky to save the match points. Roger was playing unbelievable on the clay. I'm very, very happy to win. He is so special, maybe the best ever in tennis, he has something different. Every time you play him, every point is a big challenge. I tried to play the tie-breaker point by point. I had served well in the second set, I just wanted to keep that up."

In the final set, Thiem earned a break for 2-1 as Federer netted a backhand but the Swiss rallied to break back, 4-4. The momentum fizzled though and a game later Thiem broke again for 5-4 with a lob winner. The Austrian served out his fourth victory in six matches against Federer a game later.



Austria's Dominic Thiem celebrates after winning his quarter-final match against Switzerland's Roger Federer at the Madrid Open yesterday. (Reuters)

Meanwhile, Simona Halep closed in on a return to the top of the world rankings after beating Belinda Bencic 6-2, 6-7 (2/7), 6-0 to advance to the women's final. Halep, currently number three in the world, will reclaim the number one ranking should she win her third title at the Caja Magica.

Bencic had defeated Halep in their last two matches, but the reigning

French Open champion, who lifted the trophy in Madrid in 2016 and 2017, came through in just under two hours. Halep awaits either Dutch seventh seed Kiki Bertens, a finalist in Madrid last year, or 2017 US Open champion Sloane Stephens.

"It's such a nice feeling to be back in the final here. I really enjoy playing in Madrid, it motivates me," Halep said.

The third seed comfortably claimed the opening set but let her game lapse slightly in the second.

Bencic, who opened the door for Halep to possibly return to the top of the world rankings with her quarter-final defeat of current number one Naomi Osaka, took a tight second set in a tie-breaker.

But Halep pulled herself together to

blitz Bencic in the third as she raced to a victory that increases her chances of returning to the top of the pile.

"I was rushing too much in the second-set tiebreaker," Halep said. "I was missing too many easy balls — I lost control of that tiebreak. In the third I just started over again, I played smarter, opening up the court and being more aggressive."

ASIAN BEACH VOLLEYBALL

Qatar's Tijan, Younousse enter quarter-finals

By Sports Reporter
Maoming, China

Qatar's Ahmed Tijan and Cherif Younousse kept their title defence hopes alive as the duo stormed into the quarter-finals of the 2019 Asian Senior Beach Volleyball Championships in Maoming, China.

Yesterday, second seeds Tijan and Younousse pulled off a one-sided 2-0 (21-12 21-12) win over Kazakhstan's Dimritriy Yakovlev and Sergey Bogatu to top Pool B.

The reigning champions will now take on China's Yan Tingyang and Li Jie in the last eight clash today. Tingyang and Jie beat Japan's Jumpei Ikeda Katsuhiko Shiratori 2-0 (21-17 21-15) to win the Group G.

Tijan and Younousse, ranked No.8 in the World Tour ranking, had sealed two Asian major titles last year at the Asian Championships in Satun, Thailand and the Asian Games in Indonesia.

Hosts China had all four teams reach the quarters. Top seeds Gao Peng and Li Yang, who captured gold medal at the last month's Asian Tour Samila Open in Songkhla, Thailand, topped Pool A as expected.

The Chinese duo survived a sturdy challenge from Paul Burnett and Maximilian Guehrer to edge the tough Australian rivals 2-1 (21-17 18-21 15-13 in exhausting 53 minutes). The Chinese claimed the day's second win following a comfortable 2-0 (21-12 21-15) triumph against Chinese Taipei's Hsu Chen-Wei and Wu Shin-Shian in just 27 minutes to secure their quarter-final berth.

Gao Peng and Li Yang will take on Li Zhouxin and Zhou Chaowei in the all-Chinese quarter-final clash. Li and Zhou, who emerged as the Pool H winners after a



Qatar's Ahmed Tijan and Cherif Younousse celebrate after winning a point during the 2019 Asian Senior Beach Volleyball Championships in Maoming, China, yesterday.

hard-fought 2-0 (22-20 24-22) win against Japan's Takumi Takahashi and Yoshiumi Hasegawa, overcame a serious threat from Kazakhstan's Alexandr Dyachenko and Alexey Sidorenko to stun the gold medalists at the 2014 Asian Games in Incheon,

Korea in hard-fought three-set thriller 2-1 (13-21 24-22 18-16). Also advancing were Chinese Wu Jiaxin and Ha Likejiang, who are due to challenge Aussie Christopher McHugh and Zachery Schubert in the quarter-finals.

F1

Bottas leads Mercedes one-two in practice

Reuters
Barcelona

Formula One championship leader Valtteri Bottas led both practice sessions for the Spanish Grand Prix yesterday with Mercedes teammate Lewis Hamilton a close second and Ferrari still off the pace. The times dampened hopes of an immediate return to pre-season testing form for Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel and Charles Leclerc, who have been eclipsed by Mercedes in the first four races.

The reigning champions have notched up four successive one-two finishes, leaving Ferrari 74 points adrift in the constructors' standings. "It's always an interesting day when you're bringing new parts to the car to get a feel for it and see if they bring the performance they should," said Bottas.

"The car felt really good today, completely different to how it was in winter testing, and it seems like our cornering performance has improved. The balance around the lap is also better, so it looks like we've taken the right direction since the winter."

Bottas produced his quickest lap in the day's afternoon session, a time of one minute 17.284 seconds after a 1:17.951 in the morning. Five-times world champion Hamilton was second on the timesheets, 0.049 slower than Bottas, while Leclerc was third and three tenths adrift but still ahead of Vettel who lapped in 1:17.673 on the same soft tyres.

Ferrari, who dominated pre-season testing at the Circuit de Catalunya, were using a new specification engine and hoping for



Mercedes' Finnish driver Valtteri Bottas drives during the second practice session yesterday at the Circuit de Catalunya in Montmelo on the outskirts of Barcelona ahead of the Spanish Formula One Grand Prix. (AFP)

a step up in the first race of the traditional European part of the campaign. Vettel, third in the drivers' standings, is already 35 points behind Bottas.

"I think overall we've been seeing what we expected," said the German, who was struggling for grip in the slower corners. "Cer-

tainly not as happy as we wanted to be so still a lot of homework for us. I think engine-wise we're happy," he added. "Obviously it's Friday so a bit difficult to know what we are doing compared to other people...feeling-wise it's a different story."

Bottas, who leads Hamilton by a single point thanks to his fastest lap in Australia, had missed the last half hour of the first session due to an oil leak that shut down the car and had to be investigated. Hamilton was unhappy with the performance of his car's tyres in the first session when he was fourth fastest and set his best lap on softs. "Tyre prep terrible. Rear tyres are done," the Briton said over the radio. He said later that there was work to do on the balance of the car.

Romain Grosjean, who has yet to score a point this year, was fifth and sixth fastest respectively for the Haas team with McLaren's Carlos Sainz, the only Spanish driver now that Fernando Alonso has left, sixth in the morning.

Red Bull's Max Verstappen, a winner in Spain in 2016, was only 12th fastest in the first session when his car had an oil leak, but moved up to fifth in the afternoon. "I have a good feeling about the upgrades, which work for sure, and the tyres seem to be working quite well, too," said the Dutchman. "The long runs were OK and we still need to find a little bit of pace, but we have the whole night to find it."

Canadian Lance Stroll provided the only incident of the first practice, crashing his Racing Point into the tyre wall at turn nine and bringing out red flags to close the session.

FOCUS

Latvian long jumper caught doping at London 2012

AFP
Paris

Latvia's Ineta Radevica has become the fourth competitor in the 2012 London Olympics women's long-jump final to be disqualified for doping after the International Olympic Committee said yesterday that steroids had been found in a retest of her sample from the Games.

The sample revealed traces of oxandrolone, a steroid. Radevica was European champion in 2010 and finished second in the World Championships in Daegu in 2011. In London, she finished fourth, one centimetre behind bronze medallist Janay DeLoach of the United States. The event was won by American Brittny Reese with Russian Yelena Sokolova second.

The London final started with only 11 competitors after Turkish jumper Karin Mey Melis, who was third in qualification, tested positive for the steroid testosterone. Retests of samples from Russian Anna Nazarova, who was fifth, and Belarusian Nastassia Myronchik-Ivanova, seventh, revealed another, steroid turinabol. Both have been retrospectively disqualified.

Ukrainian Marharyta Tverdoblib, who did not reach the final, has also been disqualified. She finished 26th in the qualifications despite the presence of turinabol and another steroid, stanozolol, in her retested sample. Since the IOC announced a retesting program in November using "the most recent scientific methods" more than 50 additional athletes have tested positive and more than 20 medals have been withdrawn. During the Games, 10 competitors were disqualified for failed dope tests.

Meanwhile, World and Olympic 20km walk silver medallist Maria Guadalupe Gonzalez of Mexico has been banned for four years for doping, the Athletics Integrity Unit said.

Gonzalez, 30, tested positive for the anabolic steroid trenbolone on October 17 last year and will be suspended until November 2022, said the independent body which polices drug abuse in athletics.