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BASEBALL Page 5

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Wednesday, May 22, 2019  
Ramadan 17, 1440 AH

# GULF TIMES SPORT



CRICKET

England pick Archer for World Cup

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FOOTBALL

# Xavi leaving Al Sadd, or is he?

Chances are he will be given a new role with the club, possibly as coach



Sadd's Spanish midfielder Xavi poses for a picture with Persepolis' starting eleven prior to their AFC Champions League Group D at the Azadi Stadium in Tehran Monday. At bottom, his Al Sadd teammates cheer as he is presented with a jersey bearing his name by the Persepolis management.

By Sports Reporter

Doha

Twenty years, nine months and two days after making his debut at Barcelona, Xavi Hernandez played the last match of his illustrious career on Monday night. Unfortunately, it didn't pan out as he might have envisaged as Al Sadd lost to Iran's Persepolis in their last group match of the 2019 AFC Champions League in Tehran.

While the result didn't matter much to Al Sadd, as they had already sealed their spot in the last 16 of the tournament and finished top of their group, Xavi deserved a winning farewell. The midfield maestro's hope of winning one last trophy was also dashed last Thursday after Duhail thrashed them 1-4 in the Amir Cup final at the Al Janoub Stadium.

While many would prefer to put their feet up, for some time at least, after a playing career as long and successful as Xavi, the Spaniard already seems to have chosen the next chapter of his career. It's no secret that the 39-year-old will step into a management role in Qatar, but what's creating excitement is the possibility of Xavi taking up the role with Al Sadd.

There is a strong buzz in Qatar's football circles, that Xavi will be given a long-term contract as coach of Al Sadd. And there are



Al Sadd coach Jesualdo Ferreira, who is leaving the club, has said Xavi will make a "great manager".

enough signs to suggest that rumours are not baseless. Jesualdo Ferreira, who led Sadd to league title this season, left the club after Monday night's match.

Post-match, Ferreira predicted Xavi 'will be a great manager', but stopped short of confirming that it will be at Sadd.

"I think football has bid farewell to one of the best players in the world ... it was beautiful to work with a player with Xavi's calibre," Ferreira said.

Before the match, Xavi told EFE press agency that he would start his coaching career in Qatar.

"My idea is to start managing here in Qatar to gain experience," he said.

Xavi, who won 25 trophies at Barca, wants to manage the La Liga giants in the future as he

takes baby steps in coaching at Sadd. "This will set me up to return to European football and yes, hopefully it will be Barcelona, but right now I am not in that position."

"I am not ready to take this sort of role at top level and I need to be able to take small steps before reaching my ultimate goal. I have many ideas and concepts of how I want football to be played and how I would like to pass that on to future players."

"I have always been a massive admirer of how Barcelona play, their control of the game and their style - it is something I want to reflect in my own career as Coach," he said. So all you fans of Xavi in Qatar, don't be disappointed. You might still get to see him in action, albeit in a different role.

SPOTLIGHT

# Former F1 champion Niki Lauda dead at 70



Reuters  
Vienna

Three-times Formula One champion Niki Lauda, regarded as one of the finest racers of all time and who later became a successful airline entrepreneur, has died at 70 after battling declining health.

Austrian Lauda, who was hospitalised in January for about 10 days while suffering from influenza and had a lung transplant last August, died on Monday, his family said in a statement.

"His unique achievements as an athlete and entrepreneur are and will remain unforgettable," the statement, published by Austrian media, said.

"His tireless zest for action, his straightforwardness and his courage remain a role model and a benchmark for all of us, he was a loving and caring husband, father and grandfather away from the public, and he will be missed."

Lauda won two world championships in 1975 and 1977 with Ferrari and a third in 1984 with McLaren.

He had a near-fatal crash in 1976 when racing at the Nürburgring but despite suffering serious burns, he was soon back in his Ferrari with a modified helmet and went on to claim his second F1 title.

His rivalry with British driver James Hunt, the 1976 champion for McLaren, was intense and became the subject of the acclaimed 2013 film *Rush*.

After two less successful years at rival outfit Brabham and then a two-year hiatus, Lauda returned to F1 for another four seasons at McLaren and won the 1984 title by a half-point over teammate Alain Prost.

While taking his first break after Brabham, Lauda set up a charter airline and returned to his aviation business full-time after bowing out of racing.

Through the 1980s and 1990s, he grew 'Lauda Air' into an international carrier with long-haul flights out of Austria across the globe before it was merged into Austrian Airlines in 2012.

Lauda also returned to F1 in management roles, first with Ferrari in the 1990s and later with Mercedes, where he was appointed non-executive chairman in 2012.

He is credited for helping bring five-times F1 champion Lewis Hamilton to the team from McLaren.

Lauda's death rocked the F1 community days before the Monaco Grand Prix, the jewel in the circuit's racing calendar.

"All at McLaren are deeply saddened to learn that our friend, colleague and 1984 Formula 1 World Champion, Niki Lauda, has passed away," the team said.

"Niki will forever be in our hearts and enshrined in our history."

British former F1 champion Jenson Button, who won a title with Brawn GP in 2009, tweeted: "A legend has left us. Rest in peace Niki."

## NIKI LAUDA FACTFILE

**FULL NAME:** ANDREAS NIKOLAUS LAUDA  
Age: 70  
Born: February 22, 1949  
Birthplace: Vienna  
Nationality: Austrian

1971 (retired)  
**1st win:** Spanish Grand Prix, 1974  
**Last win:** Dutch Grand Prix, 1985

**Wins:** 25  
Podiums: 54  
**Formula One career:** World champion in 1975 and 1977 (Ferrari), 1984 (McLaren)  
**Grand Prix started:** 171  
**Teams:** March (1971-1972), BRM (1973), Ferrari (1974-1977), Brabham (1978-1979), McLaren (1982-1985)  
**Debut:** Austrian Grand Prix

**Wins:** 25  
Podiums: 54  
Pole positions: 24  
Fastest laps: 24  
Total points: 420.5  
Drivers championship positions: 1st (1975, 1977, 1984), 2nd (1976), 4th (1974, 1978), 5th (1982), 10th (1983, 1985), 14th (1979), 17th (1973), unplaced (1971, 1972)



## FOCUS

# India's Kohli says World Cup will be a hit for runs

Tournament returns to a round-robin format and consistency would be key

AFP  
Mumbai, India

Cricket fans should expect a run bonanza at the ICC World Cup in England and Wales starting this month, India captain Virat Kohli said yesterday.

Ahead of India's departure for the tournament, Kohli said local seaming conditions would likely favour batsmen.

"In ICC tournaments the pitches are going to be very good and it's summer in the UK. We expect high-scoring games," Kohli told a press conference in Mumbai.

England beat Pakistan 4-0 in a five-match warmup series with nearly every game seeing innings of 350 plus on grounds that will be used for the World Cup.

Kohli insisted, however, that World Cup pressure will bring down the totals.

"A bilateral series compared to a World Cup is very different, so you might see lot of 260-270 kind of games and teams successfully defending it because of the pressure factor," said the skipper of India — one the favourites alongside England and Australia.

Two-time winners India, who start against South Africa in Southampton on June 5, feel they have a strong chance with a potent pace bowling attack led by Jasprit Bumrah.

"We go into the World Cup feeling very balanced and a strong side. You saw in the IPL (T20 series), all the players that are in the squad are in great form and playing really well," said Kohli.

India have some worries over their spinners Kuldeep Yadav and Yuzvendra Chahal, who were less impressive in the IPL.



India's captain Virat Kohli gestures during a news conference at the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) headquarters in Mumbai, India, yesterday. (Reuters)

**A bilateral series compared to a World Cup is very different, so you might see lot of 260-270 kind of games and teams successfully defending it because of the pressure factor**

— Virat Kohli,  
India captain

Chahal claimed 18 wickets for Kohli's Royal Challengers Bangalore, but Yadav struggled

with his left-arm wrist spin for Kolkata Knight Riders.

"In hindsight if you look at it, like Kuldeep, who has had so much success, it's important to see a period where things don't go your way. And I am glad it happened during the IPL, rather than the World Cup," said Kohli.

"He has time to reflect and correct things and come into the World Cup even stronger. We know the skill set he possesses along with Chahal. They are two pillars of our bowling line-up."

The 10-team World Cup returns to a round-robin format and Kohli said consistency was the only way to make the semi-finals.

"Everyone has to be at their best game intensity from the first match onwards and you don't have any room for complacency.

"That's why it's the World Cup, the most important tournament in the world," said Kohli, who compared the "intensity" to competing in football's English Premier League or Spain's La Liga.

Kohli added that his team is very confident about their form.

"Personally, I think this is probably the most challenging World Cup of all the three that I've been part of, because of the format," the 30-year-old said.

"We go into the World Cup feeling very balanced and confident. All our players have been in great form in the IPL," Kohli said.

England launch the tournament against South Africa at the Oval in London on May 30.

## SPOTLIGHT

## Archer's rapid rise earns him England spot

Reuters  
London

Fast bowler Jofra Archer's whirlwind rise continued when he was named in hosts England's 15-man World Cup squad yesterday having appeared in only three one-day internationals.

The 24-year-old, born in Barbados and who represented West Indies at Under-19 level, was not in England's provisional squad and only made his ODI debut little over a fortnight ago.

His inclusion, and that of Tom Curran, means pace bowler David Willey misses out having been a regular during England's march to the top of the ODI rankings.

It was one of three changes to England's preliminary squad.

Slow left-armers Liam Dawson was also selected ahead of Kent's utility man Joe Denly despite missing out on this month's 4-0 drubbing of Pakistan with a side strain.

Dawson, 29, has not featured for England since October but has been in good form this season, claiming 18 wickets for his county.

Opener James Vince is the other change from the preliminary squad after Alex Hales was withdrawn for disciplinary reasons.

The fast-tracking of the exciting Archer into an already-potent England side gives captain Eoin Morgan another weapon as he attempts to lead the country to their first World Cup title.

Archer can bowl at over 90mph, as well as offer quick runs with the bat.

"We've seen Jofra Archer play against Pakistan and we've seen the skills he has," national selector Ed Smith said at Lord's. "It's pretty straightforward. He's an outstanding talent, that's clear to all of us. He has pace, bounce, skill."

"David (Willey) could easily have been in the World Cup squad, he deserved to be in. It

was a very difficult situation."

Archer said his experiences in the Indian Premier League (IPL) with Rajasthan Royals will stand him in good stead for the intensity of a home World Cup.

"To be honest, international cricket is probably the same intensity as the IPL. It's different but then it isn't different," he told Sky Sports.

"Everyone has welcomed me with open arms since I got in.

"Really exciting to be a part of a big summer for English cricket. I think I'm ready. I know how to deal with pressure."

### KOHLI IS THE TARGET

And the Sussex quick had no problems in naming some of the best batsmen in the game as his World Cup targets.

"I'd quite like to get Virat Kohli out because I wasn't able to in the IPL," Archer said.

"Chris Gayle as well," added Archer, mentioning the big-hitting West Indies batsman.

Archer, whose father is English, only became eligible for England this year after a change to the ECB's rules in November.

He took one wicket on his debut against Ireland and impressed the selectors with his pace and control in two matches against Pakistan.

A good World Cup would also push Archer into contention for the Ashes series later in the summer.

England's players assemble in Southampton on Friday ahead of the first of two warm-up fixtures before the World Cup. They play Australia on Saturday and Afghanistan at The Oval on Monday.

Their World Cup quest begins against South Africa on May 30.

**SQUAD:** Eoin Morgan (captain), Moeen Ali, Jofra Archer, Jonny Bairstow, Jos Buttler (wicketkeeper), Tom Curran, Liam Dawson, Liam Plunkett, Adil Rashid, Joe Root, Jason Roy, Ben Stokes, James Vince, Chris Woakes, Mark Wood

## BOTTOMLINE

## Australia 'pumped' as Smith and Warner seek redemption

AFP  
Sydney

Skipper Aaron Finch says a rejuvenated Australia are "pumped" ahead of their defence of the World Cup, with Steve Smith and David Warner returning from bans for ball-tampering and eager to let their bats do the talking.

Australia beat New Zealand by seven wickets on home turf to be crowned champions in 2015 and extend their record as the tournament's most successful team.

From the 11 World Cups played, they have won five and were losing finalists on two other occasions.

On paper it makes them among the favourites, and they head into their opening match against Afghanistan in Bristol on June 1 on a run of eight straight one-day wins, against India and Pakistan.

But it has been a rocky ride, with the "sandpapergate" scandal in South Africa last year rattling the team as they struggled to cope with the fallout and the hole left by one-year bans handed to their two leaders and best batsmen — Smith and Warner.

The outlook was bleak after a string of poor results in the aftermath, but laid-back coach Justin Langer and the unassuming Finch have not only steadied the ship but emphatically turned it around.

And now they have potential game-changers Smith and Warner back, confidence is sky-high.

"I'm very excited," Finch said



Australia captain Aaron Finch said his side is bolstered by returning Steve Smith (right) and David Warner. (AFP)



of the upcoming challenge. "The fact that everyone is together, everyone's getting on great, the boys are pumped... it literally is the time of your life — a World Cup."

When Langer was appointed after Darren Lehmann stepped down after the ball-tampering affair, a key part of his brief was to torpedo the notorious win-at-all costs culture under then skipper Smith and his abrasive deputy Warner.

A buzzword of his now is "respect" and he took the team to the World War I battlefields of Gallipoli on the way to England to learn about "humility and perspective".

Their mettle will be put to the

test at the World Cup and the following Ashes series, with a hostile reception expected from their arch-rival English fans, with Smith and Warner in the firing line.

### 'UNDER SIEGE'

"We're ready for it," Langer insisted. "If we're under siege the second we get off the plane, we're ready for it."

Since returning to the Australian squad in recent weeks, Smith, 29, and 32-year-old Warner have kept a low profile, with all-rounder Glenn Maxwell saying they were "a little bit more reserved" in the dressing room, and were hungry to show what they could do on the pitch.

They have already shown a taste of what to expect. Warner was in prolific form at the Indian Premier League, while Smith stroked a masterful unbeaten 89 and then 91 not out in warm-up games against a New Zealand XI.

Former coach Lehmann tipped the pair to make a big impact.

"He (Smith) will be exceptional at the World Cup," Lehmann told Macquarie Sports Radio.

"People are worried about the break they have had with 12 months out, but you see them in the IPL performing and making runs.

"David Warner is an exciting machine, at the top of the

order he can set it right. If he has a really good tournament... they'll be hard to stop."

The starting XI is firming up but the batting order remains in flux, with Langer yet to decide who will open, with Finch, Warner and Usman Khawaja all in the running.

Smith is expected to come in at three or four with Shaun Marsh and Maxwell making up the top order followed by all-rounder Marcus Stoinis.

The pace attack will almost certainly feature Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Nathan Coulter-Nile and Jason Behrendorff, but questions remain as to whether Nathan Lyon or Adam Zampa will claim the spinner's spot.



England's Jofra Archer (left) and Adil Rashid celebrate their win over the Pakistan in the fifth ODI in Headingley on Sunday. (Reuters)

### Dhoni stumps fans with painting ambitions

India's Mahendra Singh Dhoni fuelled retirement speculation yesterday after sharing his dream of becoming a painter, although his ambitions for a career change seemed far from serious. The 37-year-old Dhoni, who is England-bound for the World Cup starting next week, displayed a few of what he said were his paintings in a video posted online on Monday. "I wanted to share a secret with all of you. Right from when I was a kid I always wanted to become an artist," Dhoni said in the video. "So decided I have played a lot of cricket and it's time for me to take up what I really wanted to become. And I started getting into painting." The wicketkeeper-batsman said that he would soon hold an art exhibition as he wants to pursue his painting career "very seriously". But the paintings that he showed off looked suspiciously childlike, prompting suggestions from some that the father of a four-year-old daughter may be pulling some legs.

### Former Aussie opener Slater kicked off plane: report

Former Australian opener Michael Slater was kicked off a plane after a heated argument with two friends, delaying the flight for 30 minutes, a report said yesterday. Macquarie Sports Radio, citing eyewitnesses, said the row erupted between Slater and two women as they boarded a flight from Sydney to his hometown Wagga Wagga on Sunday. It escalated with yelling and swearing as they took their seats, the broadcaster reported, claiming Slater locked himself in a toilet and refused to come out, with security called to remove him. Slater, now a well-known television pundit who is due to commentate at the upcoming World Cup in England, confirmed the incident in a statement, according to Macquarie. "I did have an argument with two friends whilst boarding a flight to Wagga and I apologise for the inconvenience this caused other passengers on the flight," he said.

SPOTLIGHT

# Mercurial Pakistan pin hopes on rising generation

'There's not too many teams who will arrive in England as prepared as we are in terms of the competition'

AFP  
Karachi

Pakistan are pinning their hopes for World Cup glory on a crop of youngsters who have the talent to beat anybody but could also pay for their lack of experience.

The side have only won the showpiece 50-over tournament once – under the captaincy of current Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan in 1992.

Khan pledged to give youth a chance while campaigning for election last year and the squad, with an average age of just 27, reflects the demographics of the country, where around two-thirds of the population are under the age of 30.

The prime minister, a swash-buckling all-rounder in his playing days, tipped 20-year-old leg-spinner Shadab Khan as a potential trump card when he met the squad last month.

Pakistan stole a march on their rivals by arriving early in England to play a five-match one-day series, although they suffered a chastening 4-0 defeat.

Coach Mickey Arthur was not too despondent after his side lost the fifth and final ODI on Sunday, saying they had learned lessons despite their drubbing.

"I know there's not too many teams who will arrive in England as prepared as we are in terms of the competition we've played against



Pakistan's Mohamed Hasnain (right) in action against England during the fifth ODI at Headingley on Sunday. (AFP)

and match fitness," said Arthur. "All I know is the players are very determined to do well. Every

time they go out there they play for 210mn people. "We'll be ready – come the

first game against the West Indies, we'll be ready?" Pakistan boast enviable op-

tions in attack, with 19-year-olds Shaheen Shah Afridi and Mohamed Hasnain part of a pace

battery led by Mohamed Amir and Junaid Khan.

Shaheen offers a wicket-taking threat with his steep bounce while Hasnain has the ability to unsettle batsmen with sheer pace, sending down thunderbolts at 150 kilometres per hour (93 miles per hour).

Twenty-four-year-old Hasan Ali, touted for his ability to strike in the middle overs of matches, has already made a name for himself and has useful experience of English conditions.

Hasan grabbed 13 wickets to help Pakistan win the Champions Trophy in England two years ago, finishing as player of the tournament.

Aside from the pacemen, Shadab and Imad Wasim are an effective spin duo who can stem the flow of runs and also take wickets.

Pakistan's batting is more vulnerable but is led by the dependable Babar Azam, 24, who is ranked seventh in the ODI batting rankings and scored a century against England at Trent Bridge last week.

Imam-ul-Haq, 23, has had to cope with allegations of nepotism over his selection – he is the nephew of chief selector Inzamam-ul-Haq – but has come out fighting, smashing 151 against England in Bristol earlier this month.

And fiery Fakhar Zaman, 29, can be a matchwinner with his never-say-die approach.

The experienced trio of Shoaib Malik, Mohamed Hafeez and captain Sarfraz Ahmed give solidity to the batting while Haris Sohail is a useful player.

UNPREDICTABILITY

Pakistan's unpredictability means they can beat any side but they could also lose to weaker teams if things do not go their way.

Never was their Jekyll and Hyde character more clearly shown than at the 2017 Champions Trophy in England, where they were crushed by 124 runs by India in their opening match but hit back to beat their fierce rivals by 180 runs in the final.

Their 1992 World Cup triumph and World Twenty20 title in 2009 also came against the odds.

Coach Arthur said he disliked the tag of unpredictability, asking critics to judge his team as a well-prepared unit and said his side had "fire in their belly". "Unpredictable is a word that we as a coaching staff hate," said Arthur.

"You read all the previews now, they say Pakistan are going to be in the top four because of their unpredictability. I say 'no, Pakistan are going to be in the top four because of the work we have put in, in their skills'."

Arthur is entitled to his opinion but fans relish Pakistan's fluctuating moods.

They love not knowing what to expect and the 2019 World Cup will be no different.

REPORT

## Shahzad ton fires Afghanistan to win

AFP  
Belfast, Ireland

Mohamed Shahzad smashed a blistering 101 as Afghanistan fine-tuned their World Cup preparations with a 126-run thrashing of Ireland to draw the one-day international series yesterday.

Afghanistan were put in to bat by the hosts in Belfast and Shahzad made them pay with his 87-ball century.

Together with Rahmat Shah, Shahzad put on 150 for the second wicket to help the visitors take control.

Najibullah Zadran added a rapid-fire 60 not out from 33 balls as Afghanistan amassed 305-7 in their 50 overs, a total that set a record for internationals at Stormont's Civil Service Cricket Club.

Ireland never looked likely to threaten Afghanistan's total despite Paul Stirling's 56-ball half century – his

fourth successive score of 50 or more.

Gulbadin Naib, who was named Afghanistan's one-day captain last month, was Ireland's chief tormentor.

Naib took 6-43 to record the third-best figures by an Afghanistan bowler in ODI cricket, including the key wickets of Stirling and Gary Wilson, who was Ireland's second highest scorer with 34.

Ireland eventually crumbled to 179 all out as Afghanistan avenged their 72-run defeat in the first game of the two-match series on Sunday. Afghanistan complete their pre-World Cup schedule with another warm-up against England at The Oval on May 27. They get their World Cup campaign underway against Australia in Bristol on June 1.

**BRIEF SCORES: Afghanistan 305-7 (Shahzad 101, Shah 62, Zadran 60 not out) beat Ireland 179 all out in 41.2 overs (Stirling 50, Naib 6-43) by 126 runs.**

FOCUS

## New Zealand veterans spurred by 2015 failure

AFP  
Wellington

After a surprise run to the final of the 2015 Cricket World Cup, New Zealand are quietly confident they can again exceed expectations in their quest for a maiden title at this year's tournament.

The Black Caps hope to shed their tag as gallant losers after making the World Cup semi-finals six times then finally reaching the decider four years ago, only to be soundly beaten by Australia.

While Kane Williamson has replaced Brendon McCullum as captain, the core of the team that came so close to glory remains, giving the New Zealanders powerful motivation for the one-day showpiece that begins in London on May 30.

Boasting a strong batting lineup and a bowling attack expected to flourish in seam-friendly English conditions, the battle-hardened Black Caps are modest but brimming with belief.

"If we play close to our potential, then hopefully we can do New Zealand proud," said coach Gary Stead.



The Black Caps have a strong one-day international record since 2017, including series whitewashes against Pakistan, the West Indies, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

There was also a tight 3-2 series loss to England, currently favourites to win the World Cup on home turf.

Williamson's men blotted their copybook with a 4-1 loss to India earlier this year that raised doubts about their ability against top-class opposition and tempered fans' hopes for the World Cup.

But the New Zealanders were insistent the lopsided scoreline was misleading and bounced back

to beat India in a T20 series.

They enter the tournament ranked fourth in the world, behind England, India and South Africa.

STINGING DEFEAT

Former England captain Mike Gatting rates the New Zealanders second only to the host nation.

"You can no longer call them dark horses as their players are so experienced," he told The Cricketer magazine.

"They play some great cricket, they always play as a team and they are well led by Kane Williamson."

Ross Taylor is also a fine batsman, and in Tim Southee and Trent Boult they have match-winning bowlers."

It is likely to be the final World Cup for seamers Southee and Boult, as well as veteran batsmen Taylor and Martin Guptill, giving the team extra motivation.

Guptill said indications were that it would be a high-scoring World Cup, suiting the Black Caps.

"(I've got) a big smile on my face," he said. "They're looking like some decent batting wickets, which is nice for me."

Taylor, gearing up for his fourth

World Cup campaign, admitted the seven-wicket loss in the 2015 final still stings and there is a desire to make amends.

"We need the key people playing well during the World Cup, and luck will be a big factor as well," he said.

"Hopefully we can go one step further than we did four years ago in New Zealand. We were pipped at the last one, but I think the players will use that as motivation."

The Black Caps in 2015 were inspired by McCullum, whose swashbuckling swagger earned his team a shot at the trophy.

But McCullum's high-risk approach proved disastrous in the final against Michael Clarke's combative Australians, when his team failed to recover after he was dismissed for a three-ball duck.

The 2019 edition features a far more pragmatic captain in the well-respected Williamson, who adopts an attacking philosophy while remaining tactically astute and level-headed.

It could prove a crucial difference if the Black Caps again reach the latter stages of the tournament.

BOTTOMLINE

## Cricket World Cup retains its primacy and England is the best place for it

By Matthew Engel  
The Guardian

Jack Bannister, who died in 2016, was an influential figure in cricket: fine seam bowler for Warwickshire, pioneer of the players' union, journalist, broadcaster, behind-the-scenes fixer. Shrewd? He could have had a Regius professorship in shrewdness. He also owned a chain of betting shops.

In 1983, halfway through the third World Cup final, Bannister had a brainstorm. An acquaintance shouted at him through the open windows of the old Lord's press box: "What price India?" "100 to 1!" With Jack, such questions were never theoretical. He took the bet, and he paid.

That was the most significant day in the history of cricket's

World Cup, the 12th iteration of which starts next Thursday and goes on till Bastille Day, or maybe Doomsday. (Modern cricket has a knack for combining brevity and eternity.)

Until Viv Richards, from a clear blue sky, mishit a pull and was well caught by Kapil Dev near Father Time, West Indies' domination of this event seemed preordained. They have never won it again, or even come close. India's very popular win (the Caribbean excepted, plus Jack) was seen at the time as a freak: a Foinavon or a Leicester City. It can now be seen as the first stage of India's takeover of world cricket.

That day they announced themselves as contenders on the field. Four years later, they staged a political coup and snatched hosting rights to the next World Cup, already as-

signed to England, and much else besides. In 2008 they sealed their financial dominance with the advent of the Indian Premier League.

In theory, one-day cricket is a democratic game. Between two teams of even roughly comparable ability either one can win on the day. And yet one of the great strengths of the World Cup is that the best team usually wins, and the roll of honour reflects that. West Indies won the first two; since then Australia have won five, India two, Pakistan and Sri Lanka one each. South Africa have been seen as perennial cho-... no, mustn't say it, New Zealand as regular worthy not-quitters and England as, well, England.

And despite the International Cricket Council's attempts to muddy the waters with a mish-mash of ersatz tournaments

designed entirely as money-makers, the World Cup has managed to retain its primacy, if not its purity.

The one-day international was invented, by accident, when the New Year 1971 Ashes Test in Melbourne was completely rained off. When the weather cleared on the intended last day, they staged a knock-out along the lines of England's pioneering Gillette Cup. Wisden did not even print the scoreboard. But 46,000 turned up – more than had attended the entire first Test in Brisbane. And we were off.

Six months later a World Cup was floated. It took four years to sort out – "timid," said John Arlott. At the start of June 1975 there were snow flurries at Lord's. Then Britain voted 2-1 to stay in Europe, at which point the sun came out. And it kept

shining throughout the two weeks of competition.

The final – Australia v West Indies – began at 11am on 21 June, the longest day. Which was lucky; it finished at 8.43pm. This was 60-over cricket, a marvelous format, encouraging speed from the batsmen without sacrificing the time-honoured skills, above all the use of attacking bowling and fields.

West Indies appeared to be on the edge of victory but before the last Aussie wicket fell there was a big stand between Thomson and Lillee with several false alarms when the pitch had to be cleared. "In those days the crowd could sit on the grass and run on at the end," the photographer Patrick Eagar recalls. "I was one of two people allowed to take pictures of the presentation by Prince Philip. I wasn't using flash. It

was getting darker and darker and I was very worried. But it all worked. It was a wonderful day's cricket."

Eagar was at the next eight finals as well but never sensed the same magic again. When the fourth tournament went to the subcontinent in 1987, games had to be cut to 50 overs because there was insufficient daylight and no floodlights. The last constraint no longer applies but soon 50-over cricket took over, with its defensive fields and tedious calculations.

Pakistan's "Cornered Tigers" triumph in 1992 (Imran Khan could have been made prime minister then and there) and Sri Lanka's win in 1996, the year of the pinch-hitter, were high points. The return to England in 1999 was an appalling farce. It began with a pathetic opening ceremony including fireworks in

mid-morning and got steadily worse. But at least one could laugh. 2007 in West Indies was suffused by the suspicion of murder that followed Bob Woolmer's death, though this one did have a farce of a final. The past two, frankly, have been largely unmemorable.

England and Wales remains the best place for a World Cup. The immigration that has made Britain change its mind about Europe since 1975 ensures that every team will have a decent following. But the format again is ratshit. Forty-five games in 38 days before the semi-finals is a means of carpet-bombing largely unwatched (in the UK) TV channels, not entrancing the unconverted with cricket's brilliance.

An event like this needs an impresario who knows how to project the game's wonders. Instead... "Oh, fool, I shall go mad!"

LOSS

# More than a machine: Lauda was a rebel in his own way

Lauda was not an emotionless automaton but a driven competitor who cared little for others' opinions

## In his own words

**CRASH**  
On August 1, 1976, Lauda suffered horrific injuries when his car burst into flames on the Nuerburgring in Germany:

■ "I have a reason to look ugly. Most people don't."  
■ "The main damage to myself was from inhaling all the flames and fumes while I was sitting in the car for about 50 seconds. It was something like 800 degrees."

**MONZA COMEBACK**

Six weeks after being given the last rites in hospital Lauda staged one of the greatest sporting comebacks, racing again at Monza:

■ "Lying in bed ruminating about the 'Ring would have finished me. I said then and later that I had conquered my fear quickly and cleanly. That was a lie. But it would have been foolish to play into the hands of my rivals by confirming my weakness. At Monza, I was rigid with fear."

**JAMES HUNT**

His relationship with the British driver was portrayed in the 2013 film *Rush* — arch rivals they may have been, but friends too:

■ "We respected each other very much because in the old days, to drive 300 kilometres an hour side by side towards a corner, if someone makes a mistake, one or both are killed. Hunt was someone you could rely on to be really precise."

**KIDNEY TRANSPLANT**

Lauda credited Birgit Wetzinger, his girlfriend of eight months who later became his wife, with giving him a new lease of life when she donated one of her kidneys in 2005:

■ "I asked my son Lucas if he would test to donate a kidney, but it did not fit. 'Birgit then said she would do the test, but I asked 'why would you do the test?' 'Because I want to,' she said. 'I said 'you will never ever donate your kidney, because I'm ill and I've known you for eight (months)'. She did the test, and she did fit. For about three months she gave me always the same impression, 'I do it for you because I love you'. She was never frightened or asked any questions, it was just a pure approach 'I will do it'."



By Richard Williams  
The Guardian

A common view of Niki Lauda is that he was an emotion-free calculating machine, the antithesis of his great rival James Hunt. The misconception gained traction during their dramatic battle for the 1976 title, when the British crowd at Brands Hatch practically rioted after a first-lap collision with Lauda's teammate threatened to eliminate Hunt from the race, and was revived by Daniel Brühl's portrayal of the three-times world champion in the 2013 feature film *Rush*.

Behind Lauda's typically Austrian facade of blunt directness, however, was a temperament very different from the one that the *Rush* screenplay, concerned to set up a duel of opposites, chose to portray. Although he chose never to flaunt his appetites for the benefit of the tabloid press, they were not much at variance from those of Hunt, who had in any case been more of a friend than an enemy since their days racing against each other in Formula Three.

Both of them started life as posh boys and each, in his own way, was a rebel. Rejecting the conventions of the comfortable Viennese affluence into which he had been born, Lauda took as much as he could in financial terms from his mostly disapproving family while climbing the motor racing ladder, but he was also willing to scrape and save like young men from less privileged backgrounds in order to achieve his ambitions. That made him a competitor at every level, all his life.

In the cockpit it brought him 25 wins from 171 grand prix starts, and three world championships at the wheel of cars from two different teams. Only Michael Schumacher, Juan Manuel Fangio, Lewis Hamilton, Alain Prost and Sebastian Vettel have won more world titles.

How many more world titles would he have won in his career

had it not been interrupted when he almost perished in the flames of an appalling accident at the old Nurburgring in 1976?

Enzo Ferrari, whose car Lauda was driving that day, thought he knew the answer. Had the Austrian stayed with the team instead of leaving after winning his second title in 1977, believing that Ferrari had let him down when his need was at its greatest, there would have been many more. At least enough to equal Fangio's five, in Ferrari's view, and all of them in his cars.

The Old Man certainly rated Lauda. How could he not, when the Austrian had worked so hard and successfully to end a decade in which the morale of the Scuderia had crumbled? "He worked like a professional," Ferrari later wrote, "meticulous in his preparation of both himself and his car, something for which he showed a natural, instinctive gift."

But other aspects of his competitive nature got up the nose of Ferrari, who disliked Lauda's tough stance on contractual negotiations and referred to him in private as "l'ebreo" — the Jew. Ferrari was used to drivers who showed a proper gratitude for being given the chance to drive the red cars. In Lauda's case, initially there had been reciprocal gratitude for his part in restoring Maranello's pride and winning the world title in 1975, his second year with the team. But when he was being treated following his near-fatal accident, Ferrari's decision to hire a replacement, Carlos Reutemann, and then merely to offer the wounded champion the team manager's job for the next season, seemed like a betrayal.

Lauda was not accusing Ferrari of being unsentimental. No one could be less sentimental than Lauda. He just wanted help to get back into the cockpit as soon as possible. "What I really needed from the team was a sense of composure, a feeling of continuity and trust," he wrote. He didn't get it. Having already signed a contract for the 1977 season, he held on to

his seat by bluffing Ferrari with the pretence of having been approached by McLaren. Months later, after wrapping up his second title, he walked out to join Bernie Ecclestone's Brabham outfit. And in 1984, during a four-year stint with McLaren, there would be a third title, won by the narrowest of margins over a younger teammate, Alain Prost.

That intense single-mindedness also cost him his first marriage. Like Enzo Ferrari, Marlene Lauda did not believe that he would return to racing after the accident, which happened shortly after their wedding. She supported him through the ordeal of recovery, but they were separated five years later.

Was Lauda a genius at the wheel, a bar-raising virtuoso in the mould of a Nuvolari, a Fangio, a Clark or a Senna? Perhaps, perhaps not. In 1973, driving for the declining BRM team, the 24-year-old's sudden leap from the ranks of the also-rans won him a Ferrari contract and within two years he had captured a first title in a manner that established his quality beyond doubt. Throughout his career he beat the best of his time, in an era whose other world champions included Emerson Fittipaldi, Jody Scheckter and Nelson Piquet.

He was a man without a scintilla of narcissism. During his early years in Formula One, racing alongside men who looked and acted like movie stars, he became known — mostly with a kind of sardonic affection — as The Rat, thanks to his narrow features and pronounced overbite. After the accident, his refusal to undergo cosmetic surgery to a face terribly scarred and discoloured by fire made him an even more distinctive figure. He set a trend by covering his burnt head with a baseball cap displaying the logo of his personal sponsor, but few of his peers would emulate his lifelong preference for shapeless tweed jackets and chain-store jeans; the casual non-style of a man who really didn't care what anyone else thought.

SPOTLIGHT

## Niki was a business visionary

AFP  
Vienna

Even the humble baseball cap he wore illustrated Niki Lauda's attitude to business and money — the multi-millionaire never missed an opportunity to accumulate more.

Lauda, whose death on Monday has plunged world sport into mourning, was more than a sporting icon, he was also a hard-edged businessman who loved to win.

He wore a red baseball cap to partially disguise the terrible injuries suffered in a fiery crash in 1976... but also to turn a profit by renting out space on the hat to sponsors.

According to *Trend* magazine, the Austrian three-times Formula One world champion had amassed a fortune of between 150-400m euros at the time of his death which he had astutely shared between assorted founda-



tations with beneficial tax arrangements.

The wealthy lifestyle included a 10-million-euro Viennese villa, a 47-metre luxury yacht, a private long-haul jet which he flew himself, as well as a much-loved rural haven on the Balearic islands.

But the trappings of wealth

seemed to mean little to a man who never spent wildly and was known for having a tight grip on the purse strings.

"I never bought a pullover or a pair of trousers until the old one was completely worn out," he told the German magazine *Focus*.

He actively encouraged the

development of his reputation as a miser, and turned the image into a successful business brand. Recently he used it to promote a bank in a publicity campaign in which he boasted he had "nothing to give away."

VISIONARY

He even joked that he would have sued his own mother for lost earnings because she gave birth to him too early — because grand prix drivers earn so much more today than they did in his prime.

But beyond the jokes and money-grubbing reputation, Lauda was above all a skilled and visionary investor in the air transportation sector, his other passion outside of grand prix racing.

A pioneer of private charter flights, he set up Lauda Air in 1979 and sold it at a considerable profit to Austrian Airlines in 2002, 11 years after a crash which killed 223 on a flight from Bangkok to Vienna.

He launched a firm flying ex-

ecutive private jets, then embarked on a new adventure, creating his own low-cost airline, Niki, which he said started making money in its first year. He sold it for a comfortable margin to Air Berlin in 2011.

Six years later he bought it back for a bargain and with Austrian government backing when Air Berlin went under.

In January 2018 he played another ace, making a significant killing when he sold off 75% of the firm to Ryanair for 50m euros.

He later sold off the remaining shares to Ryanair while holding on to the reins of the firm, re-named LaudaMotion and later, Lauda.

He believed he was an astute businessman, but denied he was ever really stingy.

"I believe I know how to spend money when the time is right," said the man who in 1996 flew a humanitarian aid plane to Kigali to deliver food to starving Rwandans devastated by war.

COMMENT

## Lauda 'irreplaceable': Mercedes chief Wolff



AFP  
London

Formula One legend Niki Lauda (left) is "irreplaceable", Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff (right) said in reaction to the death of the Austrian three-time world champion at the age of 70.

Lauda had been non-executive chairman of Mercedes since 2012 and was instrumental in persuading Lewis Hamilton to move to them for the 2013 campaign from McLaren.

The English pilot has since gone on to win four drivers championships and the team has won five successive constructors titles.

"Our Mercedes team has also lost a guiding light," said Wolff in a team statement.

"As a teammate over the past six and a half years, Niki was always brutally honest — and utterly loyal. Whenever he delivered one of his famous motivational speeches, he brought an energy that nobody else could replicate.

"Niki, you are quite simply irreplaceable, there will never be another like you."

Reactions

"Niki Lauda was a hero of motor sport, who inspired me in my youth. He is a milestone in the history of Formula One. All my thoughts go out to his family, friends and Mercedes-AMG F1 team."  
- FIA president Jean Todt

"Formula One has lost not only one of the truly great exponents of the sport but also one of its heroes. His love of racing and the courage he demonstrated were simply extraordinary and he inspired so

many fans."  
- F1 chairman and chief executive Chase Carey

"Niki will always remain one of the greatest legends of our sport — he combined heroism, humanity and honesty inside and outside the cockpit. His passing leaves a void in Formula One. We haven't just lost a hero who staged the most remarkable comeback ever seen, but also a man who brought precious clarity and candour to modern Formula One. He will be

greatly missed as our voice of common sense. Our Mercedes team has also lost a guiding light."  
- Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff

"Your passing leaves an enormous void inside me. With you I have lived some of the most beautiful moments of my life, we shared many unforgettable Ferrari victories and we were always bound together by great affection, even when we found each other competing on rival teams."

- Former Ferrari president Luca di Montezemolo  
"He was one of the few men who could sit down with Enzo Ferrari and Bernie Ecclestone, look them straight in the eye and they knew he meant business. He was a remarkable individual in every way."  
- Former F1 champion Damon Hill

"Today is a sad day for F1. The Ferrari family learns with deep sadness the news of the death of our friend Niki Lauda... You will remain forever in

our hearts and in those of the fans."  
- Ferrari F1 team  
"All at McLaren are deeply saddened to learn that our friend, colleague... Niki Lauda, has passed away. Niki will forever be in our hearts and enshrined in our history."  
- McLaren F1 team

"Thank you for everything that you did for me. I learned so much from you. Your passion, your fighting spirit, to never give up, your belief that

you always meet twice in life, and even your patience with us youngsters. Myself and... 100m fans around the world whom you also so strongly inspired to never give up in the hardest of times are thinking of you and your family... Rest in peace."  
- Former F1 champion Nico Rosberg

"A legend has left us. Rest in peace Niki."  
- Former F1 champion Jenson Button

NBA

# Warriors beat Trail Blazers in OT to reach 5th straight Finals

'I hope it doesn't go unnoticed or underrated - five straight finals hasn't been done since the 60s'

AFP  
Los Angeles

Stephen Curry and Draymond Green both posted triple-doubles to power the Golden State Warriors to a 119-117 overtime victory over the Portland Trail Blazers on Monday and into a fifth straight NBA Finals.

The two-time defending NBA champions swept the Blazers in four games in the best-of-seven Western Conference finals.

The only other team to reach five straight NBA Finals was the Boston Celtics, when they went to a record 10 in a row from 1957 to 1966.

"I hope it doesn't go unnoticed or underrated - five straight finals hasn't been done since the 60s," said Warriors coach Steve Kerr.

"It hasn't been done for a reason, it's really, really difficult and so I just can't say enough about the competitive desire of the group of guys that we have here."

The Warriors will battle for the title starting on May 30 against either the Milwaukee Bucks or Toronto Raptors, aiming to become the first team since the Los Angeles Lakers of 2000, 2001 and 2002 to three-peat as champions.

Curry and Green became the first teammates in league history to have triple-doubles in the same post-season game, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

Curry finished with 37 points, 13 rebounds and 11 assists, while Green had his second straight triple-double - posting double digits in three key statistical categories - with 18 points, 14 rebounds and 11 assists.

Fittingly, Curry and Green combined on the game-winning basket in overtime, Curry feeding Green for a three-pointer that pushed Golden State to a 119-115 lead with 39.6 seconds left in overtime.

"Obviously in that situation we want Steph to have the ball, we want Steph or Klay (Thompson) to take the shot," Green said.

"But they were swarming them. So I was just talking to them 'Watch out, watch out.'

"When he passed me the ball, I just let it go. When I shot it, it felt good."

The Trail Blazers had led 69-65 at halftime, and built the lead to 17 in the third quarter - the third straight game in which Portland led by as many as 17 only to come up short. With veteran Andre Iguodala having joined superstar Kevin Durant and DeMarcus Cousins on the injured list, the Warriors produced a total team effort to rally again.



Stephen Curry of the Golden State Warriors celebrates defeating the Portland Trail Blazers 119-117 during overtime in game four of the NBA Western Conference Finals to advance to the 2019 NBA Finals at Moda Center in Portland, Oregon. (Getty Images/AFP)

Thompson scored 17 points while reserve Kevon Looney added 12 points and 14 rebounds and Alfonso McKinnie chipped in 12 points.

"Being without Kevin these last five games has put us in a really tough spot and our guys stepped up in a big way," Kerr said.

"The group has a fibre to them - when (these) guys go down they find a way to come together and compete and win."

## WARRIORS 'FIND A WAY'

The Warriors scored the last nine points of the third period to close within 95-87 and knotted the score at 104-104 on Curry's layup with 4:34 left in regulation. "We know we can cover 17 points in a matter of three or four minutes," Green said. "So we always try to keep that mindset - that we're never out of the game."

Both teams had a chance to win in regulation, but Curry travelled before draining a three-pointer that didn't count and Lillard was unable to get through in traffic as time expired with the score tied 111-111. Portland star Lillard, playing with painful separated ribs, finished with 28 points while unheralded Meyers Leonard led the Trail Blazers with a career-high 30 points and 12 rebounds.

CJ McCollum added 26 for the Trail Blazers, but it wasn't enough for a team that had fended off elimination twice in their second-round series against the Denver Nuggets.

"We couldn't get over the hump," Trail Blazers coach Terry Stotts said. "I think it was a demonstration of how good they are and how good they have been over the years - they find a way to win."

NFL

# Bills assign Simpson's No. 32 for first time since 1977

AFP  
Los Angeles

Running back Senorise Perry is wearing jersey No. 32 during Buffalo's organised team activities, the first player assigned the uniform number by the Bills since O.J. Simpson in 1977.

Perry, 27, signed a one-year free agent contract in March. He told *The Athletic* he was surprised that the disgraced Hall of Famer's number was an option. "I thought it was retired, but then I was told it was available. Boom, I took it," said Perry, who has played 48 career games mostly on special teams with the Chicago Bears (2014) and Miami Dolphins (2017-18).

"I know the situation. I know that greatness comes with that number, playing in Buffalo. But I'm willing to take anything that comes my way," he said. "I'm going into my sixth year, and I know what it takes to get in this league and stay here. With that number on my back, I know I'm doing well for my family."

Simpson rushed for 10,183 yards and 57 touchdowns and won four rushing titles during a nine-year tenure with Buffalo from 1969-77.

Simpson, 71, was acquitted in 1995 for the murders of his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman. A jury in civil court later found him liable for wrongful death. In 2008, he was sent to prison for armed robbery and kidnapping after he tried to recover stolen memorabilia in Las Vegas. He was paroled in 2017. Perry has returned 22 kicks for 454 yards and rushed eight times for 30 yards during his NFL career.

## PATRIOTS, EDELMAN AGREE TO \$21M EXTENSION

The Patriots finalised a two-year extension worth \$21 million to perhaps keep Super Bowl MVP Julian Edelman in New England for his entire career. According to multiple reports, the extension includes an \$8 million signing bonus and \$12 million guaranteed. The 32-year-old wide receiver's contract was set to expire after the 2019 season. He signed a two-year, \$11 million deal in June 2017.

Since the Patriots drafted him in the seventh round in 2009, Edelman has played in 115 regular-season games and tallied 499 receptions for 5,390 yards and 30 touchdowns. In 18 postseason games, he has won three Super Bowl rings and caught 115 passes for 1,412 yards and five scores. Last season, he caught 74 passes for 850 yards and six TDs after serving a four-game suspension for violating the NFL's policy on performance-enhancing substances. Edelman had 10 receptions for 141 yards and was named MVP of New England's 13-3 win against the Los Angeles Rams in Super Bowl LIII on February 3.

## Browns showing interest in DT McCoy

The Cleveland Browns are interested in signing defensive tackle Gerald McCoy. McCoy, the third overall pick in the 2010 NFL Draft, was released by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Monday with three years left on his contract. The deal called for him to make \$13 million in base pay this season. The original contract was for six years and \$95.2 million.

"These decisions are very difficult, personally and professionally," Buccaneers general manager Jason Licht said in a statement. "Over the past nine years, Gerald has been a cornerstone of this franchise and a leader in our community. Parting ways with a player and person such as Gerald is one of the toughest responsibilities of this job. We wish Gerald, along with his wife, Ebony, and the entire McCoy family continued success and thank them for everything they have meant to our organisation and community." General manager John Dorsey has been aggressive in stocking the Browns' roster, including trades that brought in wide receivers Odell Beckham Jr. and Jarvis Landry and defensive end Olivier Vernon.

MLB

# Acuna and Soroka propel Braves past Giants

Reuters  
Los Angeles

Ronald Acuna Jr. hit two home runs, and rookie Mike Soroka allowed two hits over eight innings as the visiting Atlanta Braves defeated the San Francisco Giants 4-1 on Monday.

Acuna was 3-for-4 with a double and a walk. He led off the game by hitting the first pitch for a home run and added a solo shot in the seventh inning, giving him 11 for the season. It was the 10th time in his career that Acuna has opened a game with a homer. The Braves are now 8-2 since Acuna was moved back into the leadoff spot. Soroka (5-1) allowed one run - a solo homer from Brandon Crawford in the sixth. Crawford had both San Francisco hits, the other a single in the eighth inning. Soroka struck out seven, one off his career high, and did not allow a walk. He lowered his ERA to 1.01.

The right-hander retired the first 15 batters faced before Crawford broke up the perfect game and shutout. Soroka is the first Braves starter since the live-ball era began in 1920 to open the season by allowing one earned run or none in each of his first seven starts.

Left-hander Sean Newcomb worked a perfect ninth inning to earn his first career save. He struck out Steven Duggar to end the game.

San Francisco southpaw Andrew Suarez (0-1) pitched well in his season debut. Sua-

## RESULTS

Yankees	10-7	Orioles
Braves	4-1	Giants
Phillies	5-4	Cubs
Astros	3-0	White Sox
Red Sox	12-2	Blue Jays
Mets	5-3	Nationals
Athletics	6-4	Indians
Rangers	10-9	Mariners
Twins	3-1	Angels
Padres	2-1	D'backs

rez, recalled Monday from Triple-A Sacramento, threw six innings and gave up three runs on four hits and four walks. He struck out five. One of the hits against Suarez was a two-run homer by rookie left fielder Austin Riley in the sixth inning. After Nick Markakis worked a two-out walk, Riley hit his third homer since being called up last Wednesday.

Two streaks ended. San Francisco's Joe Panik went 0-for-4 and saw his consecutive on-base streak end at 17 games. Atlanta's Freddie Freeman went 1-for-3 with a walk, but he saw his streak of consecutive games with a home run end at four.

**SANCHEZ, YANKEES SINK ORIOLAS IN NINTH**  
Gary Sanchez capped a four-run top of the

ninth inning with a three-run homer as the visiting New York Yankees rallied for a 10-7 victory over the Baltimore Orioles on Monday night. The Orioles took an early 6-1 lead, helped by home runs from Hanser Alberto (4-for-5) and Renato Nunez, but three homers sparked the New York comeback. Gleyber Torres homered twice for the Yankees and now has 10 this season, eight of which have come against Baltimore.

Torres' second long ball was a solo shot in the eighth off Mychal Givens (0-1) that cut the Baltimore lead to 7-6. New York tied it in the ninth on an Aaron Hicks sacrifice fly before Sanchez (2-for-5, four RBIs) crushed a three-run homer into the left field seats with two outs off Givens, who gave up five runs in 1 1/3 innings.

Former Orioles closer Zack Britton (2-0) earned the win, and Aroldis Chapman closed it in the ninth for his 12th save.

Andrew Cashner gave the Orioles a solid starting effort, allowing three runs on five hits in six innings. He struck out three and walked two. New York starter J.A. Happ was touched up for six runs on nine hits in 3 2/3 innings, but he escaped with a no-decision thanks to the team's late rally.

The Orioles took a 2-0 lead in the first. Trey Mancini doubled in Alberto, who had led off the inning with a double. Pedro Severino's single brought in the second run.

Torres cut New York's deficit to 2-1 with a solo homer in the second.



Atlanta Braves left fielder Ronald Acuna Jr. hits a solo home run against the San Francisco Giants during the seventh inning at Oracle Park. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

## RUGBY

# Australia great Smith calls time on 20-year career

'The dreams that I had of playing rugby professionally as a young bloke, I'm fortunate to say that I've lived them and experienced so much more during my time'



In this file photo taken on July 5, 2013, Australian Wallabies rugby player flanker George Smith passes the ball at the Captain's Run training session ahead of their final rugby Test match against the British and Irish Lions in Sydney. (AFP)

Reuters  
Sydney

Australian flanker George Smith has announced his retirement from professional rugby by the age of 38, bringing an end to a career that spanned two decades and featured 111 test appearances.

The second most capped Wallabies forward of all time, Smith had played 100 times for his country by the age of 29 and was recalled after a gap of four years to play his final test against the British and Irish Lions in 2013.

The apparently evergreen back-row warrior continued to play at the top level well past the time when most forwards hang

up their boots, taking in spells in France, Japan and England, where he finished up this season with Bristol.

"Finally the day has come where I officially announce my retirement from professional rugby," Smith said in a statement.

"It's been an absolute privilege to play professionally for the past 20 years. Rugby has provided and given me so much.

"The dreams that I had of playing rugby professionally as a young bloke, I'm fortunate to say that I've lived them and experienced so much more during my time.

"I'm also proud of the opportunities I had to represent the Wallabies on numerous occasions in the past. On reflection, the time spent earning those

caps were well worth it."

Rugby Australia congratulated the twice winner of the John Eales Medal as the best Australian player of the year.

"George belongs in that rare category of player that could turn the course of a game in an instant," chief executive Raelene Castle said in a statement.

"He was universally respected by his team mates and opponents and has been a huge presence in the clubs he has represented all over the world, as well as on the international stage with the Wallabies."

Eddie Jones discovered Smith playing for Sydney club Manly in 1999 and signed him for the ACT Brumbies, where he played 142 Super Rugby matches over 12 seasons, winning two titles.

He made his test debut against

France on the November tour of 2000 and played all three tests against the Lions the following year.

He was all but ever-present throughout Jones's time as Wallabies coach, including in the 2003 World Cup final, and the England coach was thanked in his statement.

"Special mention to Eddie Jones, who has been a constant supporter and mentor of mine throughout this time," Smith added.

"The day I rocked up to sign my first Brumbies contract with dreadlocked hair, board shorts and thongs. I think back and shake my head as to why he didn't just turn me away tight there and then. I'm grateful for his advice and friendship."

Former Wallabies and Brum-

bies team mate Justin Harrison said Smith "inspired a whole generation of Australian rugby supporters" to play the game.

"We are richer for having had the opportunity to witness George playing in a gold Wallaby jersey," the former lock said as he welcomed Smith to the Classic Wallabies, a community of former Wallabies players.

A professional's professional, Smith was renowned for the remarkable work ethic that enabled him to play on for so long in such a physically wearing a sport.

"Looking back I'm pleased with the impression that I leave behind on my playing contribution," Smith said.

"It's time now to start looking forward to the next chapter that awaits my family and I."

## BADMINTON

## Malaysia stun India 3-2 to stay in Sudirman Cup hunt

AFP  
Shanghai

A gutsy young Malaysian side missing ailing legend Lee Chong Wei recovered from 2-1 down to beat India 3-2 and all but qualify for badminton's Sudirman Cup quarter-finals yesterday.

Chow Mei Kuan and Lee Meng Y were the heroes for Malaysia after winning the final-rubber women's doubles.

Chow and Lee were 19-15 down to Ashwini Ponnappa and N Sikki Reddy in the second game, but roared back to win it and take Malaysia to the cusp of the quarters.

India will now need to somehow beat hosts and strongly fancied China in Nanjing to progress at Malaysia's expense.

"It's quite a big win, we fought well as a team," said a relieved Chow.

"It was two-all (in the tie overall) and important to win, and our coach told us to enjoy our match.

"In the second game they changed their tactics and attacked more, but we just kept

our patience and got used to the change."

The Malaysians are competing in the prestigious mixed-team world championship without their talisman Lee.

The 36-year-old former number one has been out since being diagnosed last year with early stage nose cancer and his career looks to be drawing to a sad conclusion.

In his absence, Lee Zii Jia, the 21-year-old ranked 20th in the world, is representing Malaysia in the men's singles.

"This is a team event and I had to take responsibility and win, and I'm proud of it," he said after defeating Sameer Verma, ranked 13th.

India have the daunting task of needing to defeat 10-time champions China on Wednesday to stay alive.

China thrashed Malaysia 5-0 to underline the kind of upset India require.

"We played Chen Qingchen and Jia Yifan at the Asian Games, it was a close second game," said Reddy, sizing up her Chinese doubles opponents.

"We have an idea of how they play. It's their court, we have nothing to lose."



Malaysia's Chow Mei Kuan and Lee Meng Yean in action against India's Ashwini Ponnappa and N Sikki Reddy (not in picture) during their doubles match of the 2019 Sudirman Cup in Nanjing in China's southern Guangxi region yesterday. (AFP)

### World Rugby launches global campaign to boost women's game

World Rugby launched a global campaign to boost women's rugby on Tuesday, with chairman Bill Beaumont saying it was the biggest growth area in the game.

Participation levels are at an all-time high with 2.7 million players globally - making up more than a quarter of the global playing population - and a 28 percent increase in registered players since 2017.

World Rugby figures show more than 40 percent of rugby's 400 million fanbase is female. The "Try and Stop Us" campaign, launched in Dublin, is aimed at driving increased participation and engagement among fans, players and investors in the women's game.

It uses stories from 15 women and girls involved in rugby at all levels of the game. "We

firmly believe that the development of women in rugby is the single greatest opportunity for our sport to grow in the next decade," said former England captain Beaumont in a World Rugby statement. "Not only is women's rugby experiencing unprecedented growth around the world but we are well on the way to realising our vision of a more equitable game for all through the implementation of our ambitious strategic women's action plan, which is having a transformational effect on all areas of the game," he added. "From the highest levels of the sport's governance to grassroots participation, we are wholly committed to driving gender-balance and ensuring that women have equal opportunities both on and off the field."

## FOCUS

# Japan hot-shot Matsuda eyes Olympic surf gold

AFP  
Kamogawa, Japan

Just 16 and riding the crest of a wave, Japan's teenage surfing sensation Shino Matsuda has a secret weapon as she targets gold at next year's Tokyo Olympics - mum's rice balls.

Hot-shot Matsuda caught the surfing bug as a curious toddler and has emerged as a medal contender for the 2020 Olympic hosts after winning the Japan Open earlier this month.

"That has given me so much confidence," Japan's new surf queen told AFP in an interview.

"It also helped me figure out what I need to do to win tough competitions, so it was a good learning process. I love the rush of competing, but winning is awesome!"

Winning the Japan Open at the Tokyo 2020 surfing venue of Tsurigasaki - the second time she has won there - could give Matsuda a psychological edge when the sun-swept sport makes its Olympic debut.

Matsuda, who earned a spot at the world championships in Miyazaki later this year and a chance to secure a place in Japan's Olympic team, will also benefit from some good, old-fashioned home cuisine.

"Mum usually makes me 'omigiri' (rice balls) which I munch on for energy before I get in the water," said Matsuda, who has climbed to 39th in World Surf League's qualifying series.

#### JELLYFISH STINGS

"When I compete overseas and mum's not with me it can be a bit of a struggle," added the Japanese poster girl, born and raised in Chigasaki, an hour south of Tokyo on the Pacific coast.

"But the Olympics will be in Japan, where I feel most comfortable - I was so happy to win the Japan Open at next year's Olympic venue, that was big.

"I don't want to have any regrets so I'll work hard to get selected and will be going for gold for sure."

Matsuda faces competition from countrywomen Mahina Maeda, Sara Wakita and Minori

Kawai for what is likely to be a maximum two Olympic spots.

Kawai confided to AFP that she is still scared of the water - and sharks in particular - but Matsuda tweaks the nose of fear.

Asked about the possibility of becoming shark bait, the teenager shook her head with a giggle.

"I have been stung by jellyfish," she smiled after showing off a series of gnarly moves during a two-hour practice watched by her mother Yuki and faithful mutt Haina.

"That can be really painful, but I usually just try to carry on surfing."

#### ADRENALIN JUNKIE

Matsuda, whose parents were both recreational surfers, admits to being something of an adrenalin junkie.

"I started surfing when I was six and the big waves spooked me a bit at first," said the pony-tailed schoolgirl, who has won seven of her nine titles since turning pro in 2017.

"But I quickly became hooked by the thrill of it. I had never experienced anything like the feel-

ing of riding a wave."

Matsuda's style combined outrageous raw talent and a graceful elegance, but she admits touring the world can take its toll physically.

"The jet-lag and the long flights are pretty tough," said Matsuda, who has competed in Australia, South Africa and the Caribbean island of Martinique over the past year.

"But it's great to compete against the world's top surfers." While she is, to use surf-speak, amped about next year's Olympics, Matsuda just loves being in the water. "No two waves are the same," she said, attempting to describe what she loves most about surfing.

"You're competing against nature. Every moment is a pure test. When you catch a wave, you're constantly thinking and adjusting your technique - and when you nail it, there's no feeling like it."

Japanese pro surfer Shino Matsuda during a training session in Kamogawa. (AFP)



SPOTLIGHT

# Arsenal's Mkhitarian to miss Europa League final over safety fears

Midfielder's safety is a concern due to tense political dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan

AFP  
London

Arsenal manager Unai Emery described Armenian midfielder Henrikh Mkhitarian's decision to miss the Europa League final against Chelsea in Baku as a "personal" one amid fears over his safety yesterday.

Mkhitarian's well-being for the final on May 29 was a concern for Arsenal due to the tense political dispute between Armenia and final hosts Azerbaijan. "It's bad news, but we cannot do anything for this issue," said Emery.

"I spoke this morning with Mkhitarian. It's a very personal decision. He wants to play and to help us, but they spoke, both family and him, and decided to not go... I cannot push him to come with us."

Arsenal said all options had been explored to guarantee the midfielder's safety. "We have thoroughly explored all the options for Micki to be part of the squad but after discussing this with Micki and his family we have collectively agreed he will not be in our travelling party," said an Arsenal statement.

However, the Azerbaijan Football Association (AFFA) defended the safety measures put in place and described the decision was "unwarranted." "We very much regret this unwarranted decision taken, as we understand, collectively by Arsenal, the player and his family," said AFFA in a statement.

"Whilst we recognise the right to make a personal decision not to travel, we would like to reiterate that as the host country Azerbaijan has provided all the necessary guarantees required by UEFA to ensure the personal safety of Mr Mkhitarian."

Azerbaijan's foreign ministry spokeswoman, Leyla Abdullayeva, said: "Armenian sports figures have already taken part in numerous major sporting events that Azerbaijan has welcomed previously. One shouldn't mix up sport and politics."

Mkhitarian said it will hurt to miss out on a rare chance to play in a European final. "Having considered all the current options, we had to take the tough decision for me not to travel with the squad to the UEL Final against Chelsea," Mkhitarian tweeted.

"It's the kind of game that doesn't come along very often for us players and



I must admit, it hurts me a lot to miss it. I will be cheering my teammates on! Let's bring it home."

UEFA, European football's governing body, insisted they had done all they could to ensure Mkhitarian's safety in Baku. "Working alongside Arsenal FC, UEFA sought and received assurances regarding the player's safety in Azerbaijan from the highest authorities in the country," a UEFA statement read.

"As a result of these guarantees, a comprehensive security plan was developed and given to the club. While the

club acknowledges the efforts that UEFA and the Azeri government have gone to in this matter, we respect the personal decision not to travel with the player."

Mkhitarian had featured in 11 games during the Europa League campaign and his absence will be a big blow as Arsenal look for the victory they need to qualify for next season's Champions League. Arsenal have also expressed their displeasure at the selection of Baku as host city for the game given the logistical problems and huge cost faced by fans for a near 5,000 mile round trip from London.

"We have written to UEFA expressing our deep concerns about this situation," the Arsenal statement added. "We're also very sad that a player will miss out on a major European final in circumstances such as this, as it is something that comes along very rarely in a footballer's career. Micki has been a key player in our run to the final so this is a big loss for us from a team perspective."

Armenia captain Mkhitarian skipped the Gunners' Europa League fixture against Qarabag in October because of

tensions caused by a dispute over the Nagorno Karabakh region. Azerbaijan and Armenia have feuded over Nagorno Karabakh since Armenian separatists seized the territory in a war that claimed about 30,000 lives in the early 1990s.

A ceasefire was agreed in 1994 but the two countries remain locked in a bitter dispute with frequent exchanges of fire, and tensions are such that Mkhitarian also did not travel to Azerbaijan with former club Borussia Dortmund for a Europa League match against Galaba FK in 2015.

FOCUS

## Spurs ban fans for trying to sell CL final tickets

AFP  
London

Tottenham have given "indefinite" bans to three fans who tried to sell their tickets for the Champions League final against Liverpool. Three Tottenham season-ticket holders listed the seats for the showpiece at the Wanda Metropolitano stadium in Madrid on a secondary market site. But they are not allowed to resell the tickets, leading Tottenham to issue the bans.

"The club has this week issued indefinite bans to three season-ticket holders who have listed their UEFA Champions League final tickets for sale on a secondary ticketing platform," a Tottenham statement read.

"Once again, we wish to remind all our supporters that any ticket purchased is for the sole use of the individual that purchases it from the club.

Transferring or selling tickets on unofficially breaches our terms and conditions and is against the law.

"We shall look to take the strongest possible action against anyone found to be engaging in such activity – including indefinite season-ticket bans. Please do not ruin one of the biggest occasions in the club's history by selling on your ticket and profiting from fellow Spurs fans."

The north London club have been allocated just 16,613 tickets for the all-English final on June 1, meaning many fans will miss out. With so many fans of each club unlikely to get a seat in the 64,000-capacity arena, Tottenham Hotspur Supporters' Trust last week issued a joint statement with Liverpool fan group Spirit of Shankly imploring sponsors of the competition to give up tickets.

Meanwhile, Liverpool have vowed to investigate after identifying five supporters who have listed their final tickets for sale on secondary ticketing platforms.

The club warned last week, when one re-sale site was listing tickets ranging from £2,800 to £35,000, supporters could be indefinitely banned from Anfield if found guilty of such an offence.

"For those of you that have asked, as per our advisory of 19th May, we have, and will continue to, investigate all tickets that are being offered for sale on the secondary market," chief executive Peter Moore wrote on Twitter.

EUROPA LEAGUE

## Giroud gears up to face old club Arsenal

AFP  
London

Olivier Giroud is relishing the prospect of beating his old Arsenal teammates when he lines up for Chelsea in the Europa League final in Baku on May 29. The 32-year-old French World Cup winner's move across London 18 months ago has failed to deliver the regular first team football he hoped after falling behind compatriot Alexandre Lacazette and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang in the pecking order at Arsenal.

However, he has played a huge part in the Blues run to the Europa League final and is the joint top scorer in this season's competition with 10 goals. "I always like playing against my old teams," Giroud, won three FA Cups in five-and-a-half years at Arsenal, told the *Daily Mail*.

"It's going to be tough, and it could be painful if it's not going the right way, but you have to put the feelings and memories aside. I enjoyed the years I spent there. It has been a big part of my career, my first club in England and it will always be special, but now I feel my blood is blue. The same as the national team, blue suits me well."

Giroud, who yesterday signed a one-year contract extension with the Blues, says he found no problem in fitting in with his Chelsea teammates following his reported £18m transfer. "I settled in quickly. I felt like part of the family straight away," said Giroud. "I knew a few of the players and I'm a sociable person, I always try to communicate."

Giroud believes there is a more cut-throat culture at his new club compared to the Gunners and part of the reason why Chelsea have outstripped Arsenal for silverware over the past decade. "Maybe you would get more time at Arsenal. They would be more patient," he added.



"At Chelsea you have to be ready quickly because in terms of trophies it has been the best club in England for the last 10 years. You don't have time at Chelsea and when you are young it is quite difficult to find your place. I don't want to kill the dreams of these young Chelsea players. They are very talented, but it makes sense because Chelsea invest more in every transfer window and they buy more top players in the world who are more experienced."

Giroud has scored 17 goals in 62 appearances for Chelsea since joining in January 2018, but has largely been used as an understudy to Gonzalo Higuain since Alvaro Morata's loan move to Atletico Madrid. Chelsea director Marina Granovskaia added: "We are very pleased that Olivier will be a Chelsea player for another season. Since joining

us 18 months ago, he has at times had to be patient and wait for opportunities, but has still been able to make a positive contribution to the team. "Whether it is his unselfish link-up play or his 10 Europa League goals this season, he has been a crucial member of the squad and we hope he will be able to pick up a second Chelsea winner's medal in Baku later this month to accompany last season's FA Cup win."

With Chelsea still facing a two-window transfer ban, subject to an appeal before the Court of Arbitration for Sport, the club were keen to retain Giroud to ensure Sarri has attacking options next term. Higuain is set to return to Juventus after a disappointing loan, while Chelsea's Belgian winger Eden Hazard is being heavily linked with a move to Real Madrid.

## FIRMINO GIVES LIVERPOOL FITNESS BOOST AHEAD OF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL

London: Liverpool striker Roberto Firmino is on course to be fit for the Champions League final against Tottenham after returning to training during the club's break in Marbella. Firmino missed Liverpool's last three Premier League matches due to a thigh injury. But the Brazil international was able to take part in the first session of the squad's pre-final training camp yesterday, putting him in the running to face Tottenham in Madrid on June 1. Firmino was the first player to arrive on the south coast of Spain for some

individual sessions with strength and rehabilitation staff.

Having fallen just short in the Premier League title race, Jurgen Klopp's 26-man group are spending six days in Marbella before returning to England to finalise preparations for their attempt to win Liverpool's sixth European Cup. "Roberto Firmino today trained alongside his teammates following a muscle strain that ruled him out of Liverpool's last three matches," a statement on Liverpool's website revealed. "The Brazilian took part in the Reds' first session of

their Marbella training camp on Tuesday morning as he works his way back to full fitness.

Firmino has been working with the club's medical staff on his rehabilitation from the issue and his reintroduction into full team training will be carefully managed under their supervision, with specialised programmes planned over the coming days."

Also included in Liverpool's group is Guinea midfielder Naby Keita, who continues his rehabilitation from a serious groin problem suffered almost three weeks ago.

BOTTOMLINE

## France call up Barca's Lenglet

AFP  
Paris

Didier Deschamps yesterday called up an uncapped trio of players including Barcelona centre-back Clement Lenglet for a 24-man squad for the world champions' friendly against Bolivia on June 2, and Euro 2020 Group H matches against Turkey on June 8 and Andorra three days later. Accompanying Lenglet in their bid for a first cap will be Lyon right-back Leo Dubois and Lille goalkeeper Mike Maignan. One noticeable absentee, how-

ever, is Marseille 'keeper Steve Mandanda, as Deschamps took the unusual step of naming four shotstoppers as captain Hugo Lloris turns out for Tottenham in the Champions League final against Liverpool on June 1.

FRANCE'S 24-MAN SQUAD

**Goalkeepers:** Alphonse Areola (Paris SG), Benjamin Lecomte (Montpellier), Hugo Lloris (Tottenham/ENG), Mike Maignan (Lille)  
**Defenders:** Lucas Digne (Everton/ENG), Leo Dubois (Lyon), Clement Lenglet (Barcelona/ESP), Ferland Mendy (Lyon), Benjamin Pavard

(Stuttgart/GER), Samuel Umtiti (Barcelona/ESP), Raphael Varane (Real Madrid/ESP), Kurt Zouma (Everton/ENG)

**Midfielders:** N'Golo Kante (Chelsea/ENG), Blaise Matuidi (Juventus/ITA), Tanguy Ndombele (Lyon), Paul Pogba (Manchester United/ENG), Moussa Sissoko (Tottenham/ENG)

**Forwards:** Wissam Ben Yedder (Sevilla/ESP), Kingsley Coman (Bayern Munich/GER), Olivier Giroud (Chelsea/ENG), Antoine Griezmann (Atletico Madrid/ESP), Thomas Lemar (Atletico Madrid/ESP), Kylian Mbappe (Paris SG), Florian Thauvin (Marseille)

## CYCLING

# France's Demare wins crash-marred 10th stage of Giro

'I REALLY WANTED A STAGE WIN AND I GOT IT IN THE END'



FDJ rider France's Arnaud Demare celebrates finishing first in stage ten of the 102nd Giro d'Italia cycle race in Modena yesterday.

AFP  
Modena, Italy

Frenchman Arnaud Demare clinched a long-range, high-speed bunch sprint to win stage 10 of the Giro d'Italia on the cobble streets of Modena yesterday.

The 27-year-old FDJ sprinter timed his move to perfection as Italy's Elia Viviani came second and early pace setter Caleb Ewan finished fourth after a 60kph crash on the home straight took out German sprinter Pascal Ackermann.

Winner of two stages so far on the Giro

and wearer of the sprint points jersey, Ackermann got back in the saddle and trundled across the line with the left side of his outfit in tatters, showing painful looking grazes.

Ackermann retains a slight advantage over Demare in the sprint points ranking and both riders intend, unlike many others, to finish the Giro in the hope of winning the Cyclamen Jersey.

For Demarre this was a first ever Giro win, but the 27-year-old has been consistently in the mix on bunch sprints so far here and in 2016 won the Milan San Remo classic.

"We got it right today," FDJ sports

director Frederic Guesdon said after the race. "We had a good chat with him on the rest day and got him in the right mood."

The rider himself said he had never let himself become downhearted watching others win.

"We came to the Giro for this. I really wanted a stage win and I got it in the end," said a delighted Demare.

"I have been very good but missed out for one reason or another," said Demare.

"The team never lost confidence in me either," he said.

"I had a good look at the final kilometre ahead of the start at Bologna (which is

20km away) and decided to take the wide side," explained the winner.

Italy's Valerio Conti of the UAE Emirates team once again maintained his overall lead atop the GC standings.

"I hope nothing bad happened to my team mate Simone Consonni in the crash," Conti said at the winning post.

"I have been well protected by my team the whole day. I thank them for giving me one more day in the Maglia Rosa."

Yesterday's 221km of racing is the final flat stage for the sprinters before the Giro heads in to mountainous terrain, and it is likely to finish with a high-speed bunch in the Piedmont city of Novi Ligure.

## SPOTLIGHT

## Phillips donates spikes to IAAF Heritage Collection

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

USA's Dwight Phillips has donated a pair of spikes to the IAAF Heritage Collection which is currently on public display in Qatar ahead of the IAAF World Athletics Championships Doha 2019.

Phillips, the 2004 Olympic and 4-time world long jump champion, has given the shoes which he wore when leaping to bronze at the 2007 IAAF World Athletics Championships in Osaka.

The spikes were symbolically handed over to the collection in Doha via the safe hands of Qatar's best young long jumper, 18-year-old Rasheed Abdullah al-Suwaidi who trains at Aspire under the guidance of coach Al Walid Abdullah.

"My donation of these shoes is all about 'giving-back' to the sport which has given me so much," said Phillips, who retired in 2013 with a personal best of 8.74m (2009).

"I'm really pleased that my Osaka spikes will now sit in the IAAF Heritage Collection alongside the kit of Jesse Owens, Carl Lewis and Mike Powell to name but a few."

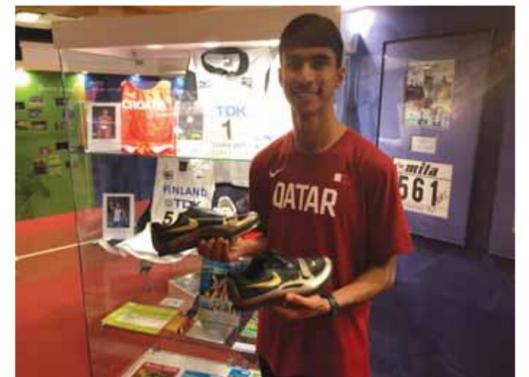
"I hope the spikes will be an



added attraction for fans and help motivate young athletes like Rasheed to aim high in their careers," confirmed Phillips, who also took gold at the 2003 IAAF World Indoor Championships.

The spikes will be on show until October 7 in the IAAF Heritage World Athletics Championships Exhibition which was opened last month by IAAF President Seb Coe and Dahlan al-Hamad, IAAF Vice President and Director General of the IAAF World Athletics Championships Doha 2019 Local Organising Committee.

The exhibition is situated in the City Center Doha, the largest shopping mall in Qatar.



Young Qatar long jumper Rasheed Abdullah al-Suwaidi with Dwight Phillips' spikes.

## TENNIS

## Pain-free Murray optimistic about return to the game



AFP  
London

Andy Murray is confident he can return to competitive tennis and has hinted at a doubles spot at Wimbledon, inspired by American doubles great Bob Bryan's return from hip surgery.

The two-time Wimbledon champion, 32, in January announced plans to retire after this year's Wimbledon due to injury, expressing doubt as to whether he would even make it to the All England Club.

The Scot has all but ruled out an appearance in the singles draw, nearly four months after surgery on a career-threatening hip problem, but he could return by playing in the men's doubles.

The former world number one told yesterday's Times there was "very little chance" he would play singles during the grass-court season.

"Potentially doubles, but I'm not trying to get ready for singles just now," he said.

"The thing I said before was that, if I wasn't feeling good, there was more chance that I would play and then stop after Wimbledon.

"Whereas if it's feeling good, it makes a bit more sense to give it time to make sure that it's as

good as possible before I try to play singles on it."

Murray, whose ranking has plummeted to 218 due to his time away from the court, said he was pain-free as he spoke about the example set by Bryan.

"I know from seeing what Bob Bryan has done (he had similar surgery last year) that for doubles it will be absolutely fine. I will need to see from there how it would work singles-wise.

"It has been really good so far. I'm playing lots of golf. I don't have any pain walking round the course and swinging clubs. When I'm on the court hitting, it has been perfect.

"If I continue to feel good, then I will obviously give it a shot in singles and see what happens. Whereas in doubles I am pretty certain I will be able to play, just based on having an example to look at.

"I can look at Bob Bryan and say, this is what he has done, he is playing top three or four in the world-level doubles. He's also nine years older than me, so why would I not be able to do the same and hopefully a bit more?"

Murray has an official deadline of June 18 to apply for a wildcard for this year's Wimbledon, where he was the champion in 2013 and 2016, and could also use his protected ranking to enter.

## FOOTBALL

## Rayyan blow 2-goal lead in Tashkent

AFC  
Tashkent

Fans at Lokomotiv Stadium were treated to a fine display of attacking football as PFC Lokomotiv came from two goals down to defeat Al Rayyan 3-2 on Matchday Six of the 2019 AFC Champions League Group B yesterday.

Both teams had already been eliminated prior to their last group game with Lokomotiv sitting third with four points, while Al Rayyan were bottom of the group with three points from their 2-1 win in the reverse fixture.

The visitors got off to a flying start, taking the lead within just 57 seconds of kick-off. Lokomotiv players looked shaky in possession as they attempted to build up from the back, allowing Al Rayyan players to apply pressure high up the field.

Goalkeeper Mamur Ikramov failed to deal with a backpass, hoofing the ball into the path of Rodrigo Tabata who intercepted the ball inside the box and fired into the back of the net to hand Al Rayyan the perfect start.

Things looked rosier for coach Gilson de Souza in his final game in charge of Al Rayyan as the Qataris doubled their lead halfway through the opening period.

Tabata curled an out-swinging corner that was met by the head of Gonzalo Viera who placed his header into the bottom corner to make it 2-0.



A piece of action from the match in Tashkent yesterday.

A lapse in concentration allowed Lokomotiv a way back into the game as Husniddin Gafurov supplied an outside-of-the-boot pass for Sardor Mirzayev who found himself in plenty of space inside Al Rayyan box and curled in his side's first of the game.

The goal gave the home side a morale boost and Andrey Fedorov's men came from the halftime break a different side.

Within just two minutes of the restart, Arslanmurat Amanov had advanced down the right and played a cross-field pass to Temurkhuja Abdukholikov who controlled and calmly placed the ball past Al

Rayyan goalkeeper Fahd Younis from a tight angle to bring the match to square one.

Amanov and Abdukholikov combined again to seal the win for Lokomotiv in the 61st minute in a similar fashion to the side's second goal.

This time around, Amanov dribbled deeper into Al Rayyan's box before whipping a low cross that Abdukholikov met first time into the back of the net to complete the hosts' comeback.

The result means Lokomotiv ended the campaign with seven points in third place, four points better off than Al Rayyan who finished in last place.

### beIN launches summer promotion

To celebrate what promises to be an exciting summer of sport, beIN has launched its summer promotion.

The summer promotion, which is valid until 10 June 2019, allows new subscribers to beIN's Elite package to watch beIN SPORTS' exclusive Total Africa Cup of Nations Egypt 2019 tournament, Copa America Brazil 2019 tournament as well as benefit from three months for free.

Subscribers to the summer promotion also have access to beIN's exclusive Total Africa Cup of Nations Egypt 2019 and Copa America Brazil 2019 channels beIN SPORTS MAX HD 1, beIN SPORTS MAX HD 2, beIN SPORTS MAX HD 3 and beIN SPORTS MAX HD 4 from 14 June to 19 July.

New subscribers to the summer promotional campaign also have the option to subscribe to any of beIN's packages for two years and get access to the best tournaments this summer has to offer for free, along with the beIN SPORTS MAX HD channels.

Current beIN subscribers can also benefit from the special summer promotion for a chance to watch some of the most exciting summer sports tournaments around.

To subscribe or for more information on beIN's summer promotion campaign, please visit beIN.net/summer2019