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**GULF TIMES**

**SPORT**

**CRICKET**

**'Universe Boss' Gayle targets World Cup swansong**

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**FOCUS**

**Qatar U-20 coach delighted with team's fighting spirit**

**By Sports Reporter**  
Tychy, Poland

**Q**atar players on Friday fought well against 'one of the best teams in the world', coach **Bruno Miguel** said.

Qatar lost to Nigeria 4-0 in their opening FIFA U-20 World Cup in Poland.

"We played against Nigeria who are one of the best teams in the World Cup," Miguel said.

"The physical fitness differences were clear between the two sides. I have to say the pitch was not at the required level," he added.

"We still have two matches to go. We fought well and our fighting

spirit was good," the coach said.

"We did not stop attacking despite the fact that we conceded goals. We remained positive and that is important," the Qatar coach said.

"Abdul Rashid and Khalid played well. We would most likely give them more pitch time next matches." When asked about the future of the young players, Miguel said: "The 2022 FIFA World Cup is still some distance away. It is too early to talk whether these players would be there. I know that this is an excellent opportunity for them to compete against the best and learn from their experience."

Qatar play Ukraine and the United States in the next two Group D matches at the 24-team event.



**FORMULA 1**

**Hamilton claims pole with record lap**

'This is the race that every driver dreams of, even as a kid'

**AFP**  
Monaco

**L**ewis Hamilton snatched a dramatic pole position for today's Monaco Grand Prix with an all-time circuit record lap in the final seconds to outpace Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas by 0.086 seconds.

The defending five-time champion and series leader clocked an unprecedented lap in 1min 10.166sec to end Bottas' run of three successive poles as Mercedes, mourning the death this week of non-executive chairman Niki Lauda, produced a record-equalling 62nd front row lock-out.

It was an emotional Hamilton's second pole in Monaco and the 84th of his career as he dug deep in the final seconds to find the speed required to grab the prime grid position from his teammate.

"Whoooah!" shouted Hamilton on team radio. "That's what I am talking about..."

Max Verstappen was third for Red Bull ahead of four-time champion Sebastian Vettel of Ferrari, Pierre Gasly in the second Red Bull and Kevin Magnussen for Haas. Last year's race winner Daniel Ricciardo was seventh for Renault ahead of Daniel Kyvyat of Toro Rosso, Carlos Sainz of McLaren and Alex Albon in the second Toro Rosso.

"This is the race that every driver dreams of, even as a kid," said Hamilton.

"We've arrived with a great car, a great battle with Valtteri and I think the desire and the will to get this pole. I've had to dig deeper than ever before.

"We all take our cars, fast or slow, to the limit and here, at the limit, it's like wrestling a bull. I



Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton (L) almost bends over after jumping onto a fence to greet fans in Monte Carlo yesterday.

had an oversteer moment in the Rascasse and I just held on."

Bottas said: "I'm disappointed. I felt after the first lap there were plenty of places to improve, but I had traffic and couldn't get the tyres up to temperature."

Luckless local hero Charles Leclerc qualified 16th after a strategic muddle by Ferrari in the opening part of qualifying.

After Vettel's crash in the morning's final free practice session, Q1 began cautiously in the warmest conditions of the weekend, the track registering 44 degrees Celsius under a hazy sun.

Mercedes, as they feared, found the conditions testing and required longer to bring their tyres alive, but were soon first and third with Bottas and Hamilton sandwiching Verstappen.

Vettel then bounced his left rear wheel off the barriers in the swimming pool complex, requir-

ing a rapid pit-stop.

He emerged with seconds remaining on shiny new 'softs' as Hamilton topped Bottas, but faced a desperate rush to reclaim from 17th – and exceeded expectations by going fastest in a frantic finale.

Leclerc was left standing in the Ferrari garage as he tumbled down the timesheets to finish 16th, the team not keeping him out after he missed a signal to the weighbridge. He was pushed back to the scales, to avoid any penalty, but it was another example of Ferrari's operational and decision-making failings.

Out with an upset Leclerc, who was fastest in the morning, went Sergio Perez, Lance Stroll, George Russell and Robert Kubica. OQ2 then began with a blistering record lap from Bottas in 1:10.701. Hamilton was one-tenth down for second with

Verstappen third ahead of Kyvyat. With four minutes remaining, all 15 returned for a final flurry in which Verstappen topped Bottas in 1:10.618 – a record that suggested he might repeat Red Bull's success, with Ricciardo, last

**Hamilton dedicates pole to Lauda**

**Monte Carlo:** Lewis Hamilton said yesterday he wanted to dedicate his "beautiful" pole-clinching lap at the Monaco Grand Prix to Niki Lauda, who died earlier this week. The emotional defending five-time champion was animated after the session, leaping into catch fencing and shouting on his team radio, before talking to reporters.

Hamilton had set an outright all-time track lap record in one minute and 10.166 seconds to outpace Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas.

"I had to dig deeper than ever,"

he said. "I'm so glad I can get that deep. That lap was beautiful. I feel amazing... This is definitely one of the best poles that I can remember.

"Obviously, we've had lots of success over the years, but I can't remember one being like this, especially after a difficult week for the whole team and, personally, a difficult weekend.

Lauda had been non-executive chairman of Mercedes.

"I've never quite got that perfect lap here and I think today was as close as I could get to it. So, this one's for Niki."

**CRICKET**

**Smith hundred sets up Australia warm-up win over England**

**AFP**  
Southampton, United Kingdom

**S**teve Smith ignored the jeers of the crowd to mark his first match against England since a ball-tampering ban with a century that set up Australia's 12-run win in a World Cup warm-up clash at Southampton yesterday.

Smith's 116 was the centrepiece of reigning world champions Australia's 297 for nine.

A target of 298 proved just beyond England, without four first-choice players including captain Eoin Morgan and fellow batsman Joe Root, as the World Cup hosts and favourites were dismissed for 285 with three balls left.

Smith and David Warner only returned to international duty earlier this month after they both completed year-long suspensions for their roles in a ball-tampering scandal in South Africa.

The disgraced duo's first match in England this tour was a hastily arranged, unofficial warm-up match against the West Indies on the nursery ground at Southampton on Wednesday.

But that fixture was played in front of fewer than 30 spectators whereas there were several thousand in the main arena yesterday for the first of several Anglo-Australian clashes in a season featuring both the World Cup and a five-Test Ashes series.

"I'm pretty chilled, everyone's entitled to their opinion," Smith told Sky Sports during the innings break when asked about the crowd's taunts.

"I'm just happy to be back playing. Fortunately, I was able to contribute today and hopefully I can take this form into the World Cup."

Warner was booed first by spectators yesterday when he walked out to open the innings with captain Aaron Finch after Australia lost the toss.

And when the left-hander arrived at the crease, one fan shouted: "Get off Warner you cheat."

Warner's dismissal for 43, caught in the deep by Jonny

Bairstow off Liam Plunkett, was greeted by immediate cheers from England fans.

But there were more boos as he returned to the pavilion to be replaced by Smith, coming in with Australia 82 for two.

The BBC reported there were a few chants of "cheat, cheat, cheat", although a lone Australia fan shouted "Get 'em Stevie!".

There was, however, the customary round of applause from the crowd for a batsman reaching his fifty when Smith got to the landmark.

Long a thorn in England's side, Smith went to 99 with a superb carved six over third man off Ben Stokes.

The next ball delivery saw Smith complete a 94-ball hundred, including eight fours, prompting yet more boos as well as clapping to acknowledge his century before he was dismissed off the penultimate ball of the innings.

England's reply saw James Vince, on his Hampshire home ground, make 64 and stand-in captain Jos Buttler a blistering 52.

But both batsmen got out when well set.

Buttler, leading England in the absence of the injured Morgan, hit 24 off one over from fast bowler Nathan Coulter-Nile.

A fierce cut for four was followed by an 84-metre straight six before Buttler cut another boundary.

He didn't score off the fourth ball of the 27th over but made amends off the last two, with a huge pulled six off the fifth delivery followed by an edged four past wicket-keeper Alex Carey.

But Coulter-Nile had his revenge when Buttler chipped him to short mid-wicket.

Vince then guided paceman Jason Behrendorff straight to Nathan Lyon at short third man.

Worryingly for England, fast bowler Mark Wood could only manage 3.1 overs before going off with what a team spokesman said was "left foot discomfort".

England do, however, expect to have Morgan back from a finger injury when they open the World Cup against South Africa at the Oval on Thursday.



Australia's Steve Smith hits a six against England at the Rose Bowl in Southampton yesterday.

## RARING TO GO

# 'Universe Boss' Gayle targets WC swansong

It is only a few months since Gayle scored 424 runs at an average of 106, including 39 sixes, in four innings against England, the World Cup favourites



In this file photo taken on February 22, 2019 Chris Gayle of West Indies hits a four during the 2nd ODI against England at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados. Can the West Indies take the form that has made them such a potent force in Twenty20 cricket into the World Cup? That is the question confronting Jason Holder's side as they head into the one-day showpiece in England and Wales that starts on May 30.

AFP  
London

Chris Gayle has the audacity to call himself "Universe Boss" but can justify his swagger by pointing to an astonishing career in which he has regularly laid waste to bowling attacks.

Even in his 40th year, in what looks likely to be his final major international tournament, the left-handed West Indies opener is planning on having a big say at the World Cup in England and Wales.

And who can blame him? It is only a few months since

Gayle scored 424 runs at an average of 106, including 39 sixes, in four innings against England, the World Cup favourites.

That deluge of runs across the Caribbean was a reminder that Gayle retains the strength and eye that have made him such a dangerous opponent during a 20-year international career.

Gayle is basically correct hitter. Pitch too full and he can drive the fastest of bowlers straight back over their heads but drop too short on either side and expect to be on the receiving end of powerful cuts and pulls.

While prepared to make some concessions to his advancing years, Gayle is in no mood to

give too much ground even if it is a decade since he hit Australia express fast bowler Brett Lee for some of the biggest sixes ever seen at the Oval in London during the 2009 World Twenty20.

"Youngsters coming at my head – it's not as easy as it was like one time before," Gayle told the cricket.com.au website. "I was quicker then."

"But they'll be wary. They know what the Universe Boss is capable of. I'm sure they will have it in the back of their mind, 'Hey, this is the most dangerous batsman they've ever seen in cricket!'"

He added: "Go ask them on camera. They're going to say, no,

they're not scared. But you ask them off the camera, they going to say, 'Yeah, he's the man. He's the man!'"

"I'm always enjoying the battle against fast bowlers, it's good," he added. "Sometimes those things actually give you extra drive as a batter. When you have a battle, I like those challenges."

One of the most entertaining batsmen of his generation, Gayle, who in recent years has often missed West Indies matches because of conflicts with administrators, relishes a large crowd in much the same way a stage actor feeds off a full house.

"The fans are always asking you for more sixes," he said.

"Those things give you that extra drive," added the Jamaican, who has scored more than 10,000 runs in 289 ODIs including 25 hundreds during a career also featuring two Test match triple centuries.

West Indies won the first two men's World Cups, in 1975 and 1979, under another big-hitting left-hander in Clive Lloyd, as much feared by bowlers in his day as Gayle is now, for all their different personalities.

"There's nothing to go out there and prove, the only thing that would be nice is to win the World Cup," said Gayle.

## SPOTLIGHT

## New Zealand see off India in low-scoring game

Reuters  
London

New Zealand comfortably beat India by six wickets in a World Cup warm-up match at The Oval in London yesterday after restricting the Virat Kohli-led side to 179.

Skipper Kane Williamson and Ross Taylor stitched together a 114-run partnership for the third wicket which helped the Kiwis to chase down the total with nearly 13 overs to spare.

"Facing a quality side like India and scoring some runs is always good," Williamson said.

India's top order capitulated in the first innings as Trent Boult made the best use of seaming conditions to pick up three quick wickets, sending Rohit Sharma, Shikhar Dhawan and KL Rahul back to the pavilion for a combined 10 runs.

Kohli also fell quickly, castled by Colin de Grandhomme to leave India floundering at 39-4. Ravindra Jadeja's 54 off 50 balls gave India a respectable total before he was caught sharply at backward point by Martin Gupthill.

James Neesham's me-

dium pace came in handy as he picked up three wickets but there was nothing on offer to assist spinners Mitchell Santner and Ish Sodhi who were both carted for 19 and 18 runs respectively in their three overs.

"We didn't get too much from the spinners but hopefully we can get them some work in the second warm-up game," Williamson added. "It was quicker in the first innings than the second innings, it got slower later on."

During the chase, Kohli opted not to give his trio of frontline fast bowlers too many overs with Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami bowling only four overs each.

"We bowled well. They were going at four, 4.5 (runs) per over and looking at that in isolation we did well," Kohli said.

"From 50 for four to get to 180 was a good effort. And of course, there wasn't much in the pitch when we came to bowl."

India play one more warm-up game against Bangladesh in Cardiff on Tuesday while New Zealand play West Indies in Bristol on the same day. The World Cup begins on Thursday.



New Zealand's Trent Boult celebrates taking the wicket of India's Rohit Sharma (unseen) for 2 runs during their World Cup warm-up match yesterday.

## CELEBRATION

## Pride and gunfire as Afghans hail win over Pakistan

Reuters  
Kabul

Afghanistan's victory over Pakistan in a warm-up match for the Cricket World Cup was greeted with prolonged volleys of celebratory gunfire and prompted a rare show of unity in a country split by increasingly bitter political divisions.

Lifted by a controlled 74 not out by Hashmatullah Shahidi and a quickfire 49 from Hazratullah Zazai, the Blue Tigers chased down Pakistan's total of 262 to win by three wickets in a timely boost before the World Cup starts on Thursday. For Afghanistan, still searching for peace after decades of war, the victory was especially sweet.

As the match concluded, automatic gunfire rang out across Kabul as fans rushed into the streets of the Afghan capital in now a familiar celebration of cricket success.

The rise of Afghan cricket has been a remarkable by-product of the decades of turmoil that forced millions into refugee camps across the border in Pakistan, where young men uprooted from home and with little to occupy them learned the sport.

On social media, politicians set aside brawls in parliament

For Afghanistan, still searching for peace after decades of war, the victory was especially sweet

and bitter accusations of corruption, incompetence and nepotism to hail the team under Gulbadin Naib who hope to make the semi-finals.

"We, the Afghans, defeated Pakistan in cricket," tweeted Amrullah Saleh, a former intelligence chief now running on President Ashraf Ghani's team for elections in September.

"Yes it happened this evening and a massive mark was registered in history."

Similar messages came from a range of other officials and political figures.

In a sporting concession, Gen. Asif Ghafoor, the powerful head of the Pakistani military communications wing, sent a tweet saying "Well played Afgan Cricket Team". Amid the congratulations, there was also criticism of the gunfire which regularly greets sporting success.

"Celebrating with gunfire is a shame, those who are interested in gunshots can join ANDSF, we need them on the battlefield," said Abdul Moqim Abdulrahimzai, a senior official in the interior ministry, referring to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces.

## FOCUS

## Grieving Asif rejoins Pakistan squad

AFP  
Karachi

Grieving Pakistan cricketer Asif Ali yesterday left for England

to join up with his country's World Cup squad following the funeral of his daughter, who he said will continue to be his strength and inspiration. Asif left the team's tour of England and returned to Pakistan following the death last Sunday of 19-month-old Dua Fatima, who had been receiving cancer treatment in the United States. She was buried in the Punjab province city of Faisalabad on Thursday.

"I want to remember Dua Fatima as a warrior," tweeted 27-year-old Asif. "She was my strength and inspiration. The fragrance of her memories

He will be available for Pakistan's second warm-up match, against Bangladesh in Cardiff today

is going to stay with me forever."

"I again request you all to pray for the soul of my princess. Thanks again for being there for me."

Middle-order batsman Asif was not named in the preliminary squad for the World Cup but was called up after hitting two half-centuries in the ODI series against England, which Pakistan lost 4-0.

He will be available for Pakistan's second warm-up match, against Bangladesh in Cardiff today.

Asif called on Pakistan fans to support the side, who open their World Cup campaign with a match against the West Indies in Nottingham on Friday.

## BOTTOMLINE

## Panesar eyes return to cricket after conquering mental woes

AFP  
London

Former England spinner Monty Panesar says he wants to return to cricket having been cured of the "paranoia/schizophrenia" which bedevilled him over the past few years.

The 37-year-old – who became a bit of a cult hero at his peak taking 167 wickets in 50 Tests – told the Daily Mail he had been helped enormously by former England captain Mike Brearley, who is a respected psychoanalyst.

His career has declined since being unceremoniously let go by Sussex in 2013 – the same year he made the last of his Test appearances – which came after he urinated on a nightclub bouncer. Panesar's depression started to spiral and contributed towards an unhappy stint at Essex and had a brief spell at Northamptonshire, where he started his career and first came to national attention.

However, since being released by them in 2016 he has yet to find another county willing to gamble on him.



"My parents became worried. They wanted me to see someone," he said.

"I had always thought strong people couldn't have a problem."

"My cricket had always gone the way I had planned it, but suddenly things started going in a direction I hadn't experienced since childhood."

"It was a guy called Peter Gilmore who said I was suffering from paranoia/schizophrenia and that shocked me massively."

"Mike Brearley told me to be careful about the things I was saying to myself. Some experts thought I'd never get better but I knew I could

fight it, come through it."

Panesar, who was recruited by Australia to serve as a spin-bowling consultant for their 2017 tour of India, says the image of him being a bad boy is wrong.

"I love the game. I'm not a bad egg in the dressing room, I'm actually a nice guy," he said.

"I want people to remember the good Monty, but it takes a while to eradicate bad memories. It's like I'm a fireball and people are worried that if they get too close to me they'll get burnt."

"I'm mentally and physically 100 per cent back to my best and I've been good for the last two years."

## GETTING READY FOR COPA AMERICA



Qatar's Hassan al-Haydos (R) and Abdelkarim Hassan during a training session in Texas yesterday. Qatar are holding a camp in Texas ahead of the Copa America in Brazil next month.



Qatar coach Felix Sanchez supervises the training session.

### SPOTLIGHT

# Celtic win Scottish Cup to complete treble treble

Celtic offer Lennon coach job on permanent basis



Celtic manager Neil Lennon and players celebrate after winning the treble as they pose with the Scottish League trophy, Scottish Cup and the Scottish Premiership trophy at Hampden Park in Glasgow yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP  
Glasgow

Neil Lennon was offered the Celtic manager's job on a permanent basis after the Hoops completed an unprecedented third consecutive domestic treble by lifting the Scottish Cup yesterday.

Celtic needed to come from behind to beat Hearts 2-1 thanks to Odsonne Edouard's double at Hampden to claim a ninth straight piece of silverware.

Lennon, who previously managed the club between 2010 and 2014, has been in caretaker charge since Brendan Rodgers

left for Leicester in February, and the club said his contract details will be confirmed in the coming days. "One of the best days of my life. It's hard to quantify what this team has done," said Lennon.

"We'll never see it again. You could see the emotion and tension in the game."

Celtic chief executive Peter Lawwell hailed Lennon's impact to steady the ship when Rodgers left the Scottish champions in the lurch mid-season.

"There is no better candidate and he has earned the right to be the manager of Celtic," said Lawwell. Lennon consolidated an eight-point lead when he returned to the club to win an

eighth straight Scottish Premiership and masterminded Scottish Cup wins over Hibs, Aberdeen and Hearts. The Northern Irishman also won 11 major trophies at Celtic as a player. "They are immortal now," said Lennon of his players. "You can't quantify how difficult it is. In my career to win the treble (once) was the holy grail. They've done it three years consecutively. It's unbelievable."

Despite losing just once in 14 games during his caretaker spell in charge, Lennon has faced criticism for a string of poor performances. Celtic were again disjointed for long spells and could easily have been beat-

en but for a bit more quality and composure from a Hearts side missing a host of key players through injury. Hearts had not won in five games since their semi-final victory over second-tier Inverness, but they made the breakthrough with their first big chance of the game.

In a crowded penalty area, Sean Clare backheeled to find the free Ryan Edwards to slot home seven minutes into the second half. Celtic seemed to need the shock of going behind to snap into action and levelled within 10 minutes. Edouard was tripped by Hearts goalkeeper Zdenek Zlamal and referee Willie Collum pointed to the spot. Zlamal could have made

amends, but did not get a strong enough hand to Edouard's penalty to keep it out. Celtic paid a club record £9 million (\$11 million) for Edouard from Paris Saint-Germain 11 months ago and he took his tally for the season to 23 by coolly slotting home when Mikael Lustig's forward header somehow evaded the whole Hearts defence.

"He's only 21 and he's taken on that responsibility brilliantly," Lennon said of Edouard.

"Today was another brilliant show from him in a big game. Again he's put himself down in annals of the club's history. Like him as a player a lot. His temperament and his quality is fantastic."

### FOCUS

## Neymar arrives at Brazil camp ahead of Copa America

AFP  
Teresopolis, Brazil

Neymar arrived at Brazil's national team headquarters near Rio de Janeiro on Saturday as the country begins its preparations for next month's Copa America tournament. The Paris Saint-Germain forward touched down in a helicopter at the training complex in Teresopolis, three days ahead of schedule.

"There's a lot of pressure but when our team gets on the same page, with the help of the supporters, we're unstoppable," Neymar said in a video posted by the Brazilian FA on social media.

"I've already played two competitions here. I've known the bad side but also the good side," he said. Neymar, 27, missed the humiliating 7-1 World Cup semi-final defeat by Germany in 2014 due to injury after fracturing his back in the previous round. A year earlier he was named player of the tournament

at the Confederations Cup as Brazil won the competition for a record fourth time.

Neymar sat out PSG's last two games of this season due to suspension after being handed a three-match ban for lashing out at a spectator following his side's shock defeat by Rennes in the French Cup final last month.

Reporters were tipped off to Neymar's early arrival after he failed to show up to a PSG training session open to the media.

His team-mates Marquinhos and Thiago Silva, who are also part of the Brazilian squad, were there. When asked if Neymar had been released from training, coach Thomas Tuchel said "not by me."

The forward is expected to sit down with Brazil boss Tite in the coming days as the latter ponders whether to strip Neymar of the captaincy following his fan altercation.

"He made a mistake but I want to talk to him face to face," Tite said last week as he named his squad.

### Tuchel extends PSG contract until 2021

Paris St Germain manager Thomas Tuchel has signed a contract extension which will keep him with the Ligue 1 champions until the end of the 2020-21 season, the club announced yesterday. Tuchel, who was hired by PSG last year, finished the 2018-19 campaign with mixed results despite winning the league title by 16 points. The 2017-18 domestic quadruple winners finished runners-up

in the domestic cup (Coupe de France) and were knocked out in the last-16 of the Champions League and quarter-finals of the French League Cup. "Paris Saint-Germain is pleased to announce Thomas Tuchel's contract extension for an additional season," the club said in a statement. "The German coach has now signed until 30 June 2021 with the French capital's club."

### LIGUE 1

## Dijon escape automatic relegation on final day

AFP  
Paris

Dijon came from behind on the last day of Ligue 1 on Friday to beat Toulouse, 2-1, and grab a lifeline that could keep them in the French top flight.

"It was the day of an exploit," said Dijon manager Antoine Kombouare.

At the start of the final round, Guingamp were sure to finish last, while Dijon occupied the other direct relegation spot, one point behind Caen occupying the pace that brings a playoff against a Ligue 2 team.

Both could have caught Monaco and Amiens and escaped altogether.

Dijon needed to win but fell behind at home to a 33rd minute goal by Bafode Diakite. Naim Sliti levelled after 58 minutes. Four minutes later, Julio Tavares smashed in a close range shot that Mauro Goicoechea reached but could not stop only for the assistant referee to flag off side.

Referee Mikael Lesage consulted video replay and awarded the goal.

Caen, who had needed only a draw to stay clear of Dijon, lost 1-0 at home to Bordeaux despite frantic second-half pressure. Younousse Sankhare headed the only goal of the game after 19 minutes and were relegated.

Asked if he was disappointed, Caen president Gilles Sergent told French television: "The word is too weak. We had our destiny in hand tonight, all we had to do was win or just draw."

"We feel ashamed tonight," he said. "We're going to have to prepare for the next season in

Ligue 2. That's hard to say." Caen's defeat meant Monaco, who suffered an ugly 2-0 loss along the Riviera at Nice and Amiens, who beat Guingamp 2-1, were safe.

"This season was very hard for everyone," said Leonardo Jardim who started and finished the season as Monaco coach but was replaced from October to January by Thierry Henry.

"I am very relieved and very happy."

Paris Saint-Germain, long ago confirmed as champion, lost 3-1 at Reims but still finished 16 points clear. Kylian Mbappe scored the PSG goal to finish the season on 33 goals, 11 more than the next highest scorer in Ligue 1, Nicolas Pepe of Lille.

### 'PROUD AND HAPPY'

Lille, already sure of second and a place in the Champions League group stage, subsided 3-1 at Rennes, finishing the match with 10 men.

Lyon, sure of third and, at the least, a place in Champions League qualifying, scored in the 89th minute and then in added time to win 3-2 at Nimes.

"I am proud and happy," said Bruno Genesio, after his last match as Lyon coach.

"I asked the players to finish the season well. They did it."

Mario Balotelli earned the other red card of the final day, stamping on an opponent with three minutes left but Marseille still beat Montpellier 1-0, to take fifth place.

Dijon will now play Lens, who finished fifth in Ligue 2 but beat Troyes in a the playoffs earlier Friday, for a place in Ligue 1. The two-leg playoff begins on Thursday.

### beIN SPORTS hosts 'Week of Champions'

beIN SPORTS, the global sports broadcaster is set to bring an exciting football season to a close with a series of mouth-watering finals during its highly anticipated 'Week of Champions' with games spanning from South America all the way to Baku, Azerbaijan.

African Football fans eagerly await the second leg of the CAF Confederations Cup Final which gets underway on May 26 at 23:00 Mecca Time (GMT +3). The final sees Egypt's Zamalek take on Morocco's RSB Berkane live on beIN SPORTS HD 1 and 14.

The second leg of the final of the CAF Champions League follows soon after as Esperance ST of Tunisia take on Wydad

Athletic Club of Morocco on May 31 at 23:00 Mecca Time (GMT+3) live on beIN SPORTS HD 1 and 11.

The UEFA Europa League and UEFA Champions League Finals are up next with live and exclusive coverage from Madrid and Baku on beIN SPORTS HD 1, HD11, HD14 and 4K. The UEFA Europa League Final between Arsenal and Chelsea kicks off on Wednesday 29 May at 22:00 Mecca Time (GMT+3) whereas the UEFA Champions League Final between Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur kicks off on June 1 at 22:00 Mecca Time (GMT+3). South American football fans can also follow the second leg of the Recopa

Sudamericana exclusively on beIN SPORTS HD 1 and 11 where Argentina's River Plate face Brazil's Atletico Paranaense.

The game kicks off on May 31 at 3:30 Mecca Time (GMT+3). beIN's multi-talented presenters and guests from around the region including Mohamed Saadon al-Kuwari, Ayman Jada, Lakhdar Berriche, Bassel Tabbal, Abdelaziz asl-Nasr and Mohamed Abutrika will be across all the action ensuring fans don't miss a beat. Jonathan Whitehead, Sports Advisor at beIN MEDIA GROUP said: "We are extremely excited to be showcasing the climax of another thrilling football

season with the finals of the best tournaments from around the world. The Week of Champions on beIN SPORTS highlights the magnitude of our world class coverage and is another step in our efforts to connect our subscribers to the biggest and best competitions from around the globe.

The diversity of our offering and the quality of our punditry and analyst team help set us apart as the biggest and best sports broadcaster". With competitions like the Total Africa Cup of Nations Egypt 2019 and the Copa America Brazil 2019 kicking off in June, football fans won't have to wait long to get their football fix.



Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe holds 'best striker' trophy at the end of the French L1 match against Reims at the Auguste-Delaune Stadium in Reims. (AFP)



## CYCLING

# Carapaz to fight all the way to Verona after grabbing pink

'We knew the altitude was good for me. I gave it everything... entire Giro was at stake'

AFP  
Courmayeur, Italy

**R**ichard Carapaz vowed to fight all the way to win the Giro d'Italia after shooting to the top of overall standings with an impressive solo summit finish victory to take stage 14 and the pink jersey yesterday.

Movistar's Ecuadorian climber edged ahead of Primoz Roglic in the standings after breaking from the chief contenders on the Giro's toughest hill yet, and after the win a confident Carapaz, 25, threw down the gauntlet to his principal rivals.

"I was thinking just now, it seems only yesterday that I was at home in Ecuador playing on a toy bike. Now I'm here wearing the Maglia Rosa," said an elated Carapaz. "We'll try and keep the jersey and defend it all the way to Verona."

Britain's Simon Yates was second after attacking on the last kilometre, gaining some redemption for earlier disappointments and climbing to ninth overall, 5min 28sec off the lead.

New leader Carapaz said there was no problem in his team where Mikel Landa would normally be seen as the team leader and who stands fifth at 2min 50sec, and was instead in dreamland after winning his second stage in this year's Giro.

"I worked so hard for this, it's a real dream come true," added Carapaz at the winning post.

"I felt good this morning. We knew the altitude was good for me. I gave it everything because I knew the entire Giro was at stake."

## NIBALI ROLE

Man-to-beat Roglic and two-time winner Vincenzo Nibali kept a close eye on each other all



Team Movistar's Ecuadorian rider Richard Carapaz celebrates his victory as he crosses the finish line to win stage 14 of the 102nd Giro d'Italia in Courmayeur, Italy, yesterday. (AFP)

day with the Italian testing the Slovenian with a daredevil descent on the penultimate climb, the Colle San Carlo.

It was on that hill that overnight leader Jan Polanc ran out of gas and gave up the pink jersey and lost almost eight minutes on the day.

The win and the show of power with which it was achieved, marks out Carapaz as a contender after he came fourth in the Giro last year.

He now leads Roglic by 7sec

while Nibali is third at 1min 47sec.

The Bahrain Merida sports director Brent Copeland was in upbeat mood after the race when asked about his captain Nibali's chances.

"There's a great deal to look forward to. We are going to have a role to play here and there are a number of stages which suit Vincenzo coming up," said Copeland.

Today stage is one of the longest on the Giro at 232km, starting with a 160km flat section

before the race swings into a series of short but challenging climbs and descents which pundits feel may suit Nibali.

## STAGE 14 RESULTS

1. Richard Carapaz (MOV) 4:02:23
2. Simon Yates (MIT) +1:32
3. Vincenzo Nibali (BAH) +1:54
4. Rafal Majka (BOR) same time
5. Mikel Landa (MOV) s.t.
6. Miguel Angel Lopez (AST) s.t.
7. Pavel Sivakov (INE) s.t.
8. Primoz Roglic (JUM) s.t.
9. Joe Dombrowski (EF1) s.t.

10. Damiano Caruso (BAH) +2:01

## OVERALL CLASSIFICATION

1. Richard Carapaz (MOV) 58:35:34
2. Primoz Roglic (JUM) +7sec
3. Vincenzo Nibali (BAH) +1:47
4. Rafal Majka (BOR) +2:10
5. Mikel Landa (MOV) +2:50
6. Bauke Mollema (TRE) +2:58
7. Jan Polanc (UAE) +3:29
8. Pavel Sivakov (INE) +4:55
9. Simon Yates (MIT) +5:28
10. Miguel Angel Lopez (AST) +5:30

## BADMINTON

# Japan one win from first Sudirman title – but must beat China today

AFP  
Nanning, China

**J**apan will have to defy the home crowd and the weight of history if they are to win the Sudirman Cup against China on Sunday.

Japan have never lifted the mixed-team world championship since it began in 1989.

In contrast, the hosts have won it a record 10 times and go into the final as slight favourites despite Japan being top seeds in Nanning.

World number one Kento Momota, Japan's talisman, must beat second-ranked Shi Yuqi if they are to stand any chance.

Momota, 24, did just that in the final of the world championships, also in China, last year.

Japan yesterday lost their opening match to Indonesia, in men's doubles, before winning 3-1 while China dismantled Thailand 3-0 to set up a meeting between badminton's two pre-eminent powers.

The usually cool Momota celebrated wildly, pumping his fists and bellowing after seeing off Anthony Ginting 21-17, 21-19 to put Japan up 2-1 in the semi-final tie.

The doubles pairing of Mayu Matsumoto and Wakana Naga-hara, the top-ranked women's duo in the world, sealed Japan's place in the final.

China were even more clinical as they made the Sudirman Cup final for the 13th time in a row.

They were stunned by South Korea in the last edition, in Aus-



Japan's Kento Momota hits a return against Indonesia's Anthony Sinisuka Ginting during their men's singles semi-final at the 2019 Sudirman Cup in Nanning, China, yesterday. (AFP)

tralia in 2017, but they look in ominous form on home turf.

The Chinese went 2-0 ahead against Thailand in just 94 minutes thanks to their world number one mixed doubles pair Zheng Siwei and Huang Ya-qiong, and Shi in the men's singles.

The tie was over when the men's doubles world champions Li Junhui and Liu Yuchen triumphed.

Shi did not have it all his own way against 18th-ranked Kantaphon Wangcharoen, who squandered three opportunities to clinch the second game and

force a decider.

It was a turning point and Shi held his nerve before closing out victory 21-15, 26-24 to thrill the home crowd and snuff out the brief Thai resistance.

"It was a very tough second game," said Shi, who has inherited the mantle of China's top

men's player with Lin Dan approaching retirement and Chen Long past his prime.

"The lead changed hands many times and neither of us could open up a big lead," added the 23-year-old Shi.

"In the end I managed to overcome the pressure."

## SUPER RUGBY

# Jaguares edge out Waratahs, Crusaders hold on against Blues

AFP  
Christchurch, New Zealand

**T**he table-topping Canterbury Crusaders put a torrid week behind them to hold off the Auckland Blues yesterday while the red-hot Jaguares shored up their Super Rugby finals hopes with a gritty win over the NSW Waratahs.

On a triple header day, the Melbourne Rebels pulverised Japan's Sunwolves 52-7 to stay one point behind the ACT Brumbies in the Australian pool, although the runaway win came at a price with star scrum-half Will Genia knocked out.

Argentina's Jaguares moved four points clear of the Bulls in the South African conference by beating the Waratahs 23-15, dealing a big hit to the Sydney-based team's hopes of making the playoffs.

With two matches remaining, the Crusaders' 19-11 victory opened up a 13-point lead at the top of the New Zealand table from the Wellington Hurricanes, who have three games left.

The Crusaders, who have been under the microscope following allegations of offensive behaviour on their recent South African tour, looked comfortable at 16-6 before a late Rieko Ioane try gave the visitors the chance of an upset.

However, a Richie Mo'unga penalty with four minutes remaining sealed the outcome for the defending champions in a match played with a heavy dew which restricted try-scoring opportunities.

"It wasn't pretty at times," Crusaders skipper Sam Whitelock said.

"We had a few challenges coming home from South Africa, a short turnaround, a few of the boys had a lack of sleep this week."

But two All Blacks identified in the off-field accusations levelled at the Crusaders, Mo'unga and George Bridge, appeared unaffected by the attention and played starring roles.

After David Havili waltzed through an ineffectual Blues defence to have the Crusaders on attack from the kick-off, the visitors held off repeated raids and it was left to Mo'unga to get the Crusaders on the board with two penalties.

The fly-half also featured in the only try of the first half with a well-weighted chip which Ryan Crotty gathered to send Bryn Hall away.

The Blues, who prop up the New Zealand conference, responded with a penalty to Harry Plummer for the Crusaders to make the turn with a 13-3 lead.

Plummer and Mo'unga then exchanged penalties before Ioane's try and Mo'unga's fourth penalty.

## PHYSICAL GAME

In Sydney, the well-drilled Jaguares, packed with Test players, came into the game on a run of five wins from six and were simply too good for Michael Hooper's Waratahs.

An intense period of pressure paid off for them in the 25th minute with winger Ramiro Moyano collecting a Jeronimo de la Fuente grubber kick to dot down for a converted try.

Bernard Foley pulled three points back but Domingo Miotti cancelled it out with a Jaguares penalty as the visitors took a 10-3 half-time lead.

Moyano bagged his second by finishing a counter-attack to put them 17-3 ahead before the Tahs were awarded a penalty try and roared back when Curtis Rona crossed in the corner.

But Foley missed the conversion and two late penalties from Joaquin Diaz Bonilla sealed the win.



Jaguares' Ramiro Moyano (right) is tackled by Waratahs' Kurtley Beale (centre) during the Super Rugby match in Sydney yesterday. (AFP)

## SPOTLIGHT

# Sharks beat Lions to keep up playoff hopes

Reuters  
Durban

**T**wo intercept tries proved crucial as the Sharks beat the Lions 27-17 at King's Park yesterday in a key Super Rugby contest for both sides as they battle for post-season playoff places.

Sharks pivot Curwin Bosch scored one of the tries and added 12 more points with his boot to help the Sharks to four vital points as they moved up to second place in the South African conference, three points more than the Lions, with both sides having three more regular-season games.

Yesterday's loss for the visitors from Johannesburg kept up a dismal record of no wins this season for the Lions against fellow South African teams.

Bosch scuffed an early opportunity to put points on the board by shanking wide a penalty but quickly made up for it with a clever intercept between a flat Lions backline, sprinting half the pitch for a runaway try.

That 17th-minute score, which he converted, was followed by a second try for the Sharks six minutes later as number eight Daniel du Preez went over at the end of a driving maul from a close-in line out.

After looking loose on defence and uninspiring in attack, the Lions suddenly burst into the game and a sweeping backline move

saw a short pass from flyhalf Elton Jantjies put centre Lionel Mapoe over in the 31st minute.

They were level at 14-14 in the 50th minute after Aphiwe Dyan-tyi broke with pace, then Mapoe showed strength in the tackle to make more ground, almost to the try line, before flanker Cyle Brink finished off the move by crossing over.

Bosch put the Sharks back in front by three points as the Lions were penalised for hands in the ruck but when the Lions got a penalty chance just minutes later, they went for the corner rather than take the kick in an effort to take the lead for the first time.

They went through 12 phases as they tried to batter their way over the Sharks' line but then had the ball intercepted by left wing Makazole Mapimpi who ran the entire length of the field to put the hosts 24-14 ahead with 20 minutes to play.

The Lions then uncharacteristically elected to take a penalty to try to reduce the deficit to seven points going into the final quarter-hour of play but Jantjies kicked wide.

Mapimpi then showed his defensive qualities to make a decisive tackle on Mapoe to deny the Lions a second try.

Jantjies put over a penalty for the Lions in the 72nd minute but Bosch restored the 10-point advantage with a kick of his own four minutes from time, denying the Lions a bonus point.

NBA

# Durant talks injury, says team not better without him

'I know what I bring to the team but I also know a lot of people on the outside don't like to see us together'

AFP  
Los Angeles

**G**olden State Warriors forward Kevin Durant is unlikely to play in Game 1 of the NBA Finals on Thursday against either the Toronto Raptors or Milwaukee Bucks.

Durant has missed the past five games with a right calf injury and he told reporters on Friday that he was initially worried that he had torn his Achilles tendon. "I've seen the clip on the screen and it's like 'that's the Achilles, that's the Achilles,'" Durant told reporters.

"Obviously, everybody is going to be a little nervous until someone reassured me that it's not."

"... I started walking and I realised I could put some weight on it and it wasn't as bad as I thought. I was pretty relieved."

Asked to compare the current injury to previous calf injuries he's sustained, Durant said that this one was much different. "This is worse," Durant said of the injury sustained against

the Houston Rockets on May 8 in Game 5 of the Western Conference finals. The news was better for swingman Andre Iguodala (left calf) and big man DeMarcus Cousins (quadriceps). Coach Steve Kerr said Iguodala will be available for Game 1. Cousins scrimmaged on Friday and has a chance at being ready for the opener, as well.

Meanwhile, Durant is miffed at the recent narrative that the Warriors are a better team without him. Golden State is 5-0 since losing the 10-time All-Star. Durant was averaging 34.2 points in the postseason prior to the injury against the Rockets.

"It's hard to get away from that because I watch the games (when Golden State is on the road) and I saw the lead-up to the game and I saw everybody talking about it," Durant said.

"... As a player, I think about that and I'm just like 'That's not true, that's not the facts' when it comes from a basketball perspective."

Durant, who could leave as a free agent after the season, also feels outsiders are trying to drive a wedge between him and his teammates. "It's been that way since I got here, it's the Warriors and K.D. I understand that," said Durant, who joined the Warriors in the summer of 2016.

"I feel the organisation knows exactly what I've done on and off the court to become part of this culture and stamp my flag on this



Golden State Warriors forward Kevin Durant passes the ball in front of Memphis Grizzlies forward Julian Washburn in the first quarter of their NBA game at FedExForum on April 10, 2019. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

organisation. "The last two years, I've done pretty much everything that they asked me to do from player, ambassador to the community to working hard every single day in shootarounds and practices. "I

know what I bring to the team but I also know a lot of people on the outside don't like to see us together. I get it."

Star guard Stephen Curry said he doesn't understand why there isn't

a general feeling of happiness when a team or players do well.

"We're a great team because everybody in the room who put on the uniform goes out and competes at a high level," Curry said.

"We look out for each other. There is sacrifice. At the end of the day, it's all about winning."

Toronto holds a 3-2 lead in the East and can close out its series on Saturday when it hosts the Bucks.

SPOTLIGHT

## LeBron James reportedly recruiting Butler to Lakers

By Rob Torno  
The Philadelphia Inquirer and Daily News

**L**eBron James doesn't appear to be wasting much time sitting on the couch watching the NBA playoffs.

The Lakers superstar is spending his off-season reaching out to potential free agents about joining him in Los Angeles, according to multiple reports. And one of the people James is reportedly targeting is Sixers swingman Jimmy Butler.

"(Butler) likes L.A., LeBron James has been in touch with him and he would join the Lakers in a second if they offered him a max deal," Los Angeles Times sports columnist Arash Markazi wrote on Twitter Thursday.

Markazi isn't alone in suggesting James has interest in playing alongside Butler. ESPN's Brian Windhorst reported on Thursday's Pardon the Interruption that the Lakers star reached out to both Butler and Toronto Raptors star Kawhi Leonard more than a month ahead of the official start of NBA free agency, which this year is June 30 at 6pm.

"From what I understand, (James) has already begun the recruiting process," Windhorst said. "There's no tampering enforcement by players, and while Magic Johnson - the guy who got in trouble for tampering before is no longer there - LeBron is 'tamperer-in-chief' of the Lakers right now."

Butler is slated to make \$19.84 million next season, but he has a player option that he's expected to decline, making him a free agent. Following the Sixers' season-ending loss to the Raptors earlier this month, Butler told reporters he enjoyed playing in Philadelphia, where he became a fan favorite during the second half of the season and playoffs.

"As long as you play hard, the city loves you; and give your all, that is all they ask of you," Butler said. "It has definitely been fun to meet and interact with the fans and the people in the organisation and absolutely everybody is amazing."

Despite the outreach by James, it's unclear if Butler would want to play alongside the NBA superstar. Prior to Butler's signing with the Sixers last season, ESPN's Adrian Wojnarowski reported that playing in Los Angeles was "less appealing" to Butler after James signed with the Lakers.

There's also still the possibility the Sixers will offer Butler a max contract to remain in Philadelphia alongside Joel Embiid and Ben Simmons. After trading for Tobias Harris back in February, general manager Elton Brand said the team's managing partners were on board with re-signing both free agents "to keep this core together a long time."

But Butler also posted a cryptic Instagram message that seemed like a goodbye to many Sixers fans. "Technically, knock on wood, I'll get a max contract anywhere I choose to go," Butler told reporters earlier this month.

"You always want to be able to win. That's the key for me, for sure. You're looking at coaches, looking at the city. There's a lot that goes into it. But for me, as long as I've got my people with me, everybody knows I'm cool if they're happy."



Jimmy Butler of the Philadelphia 76ers reacts along with James Ennis III at the end of the second quarter of game six of the Eastern Conference Semifinals against the Toronto Raptors at the Wells Fargo Center on May 9, 2019. (Getty Images/TNS)

MLB

# Giants demolished at home, set Oracle Park record

By Kerry Crowley  
The Mercury News

**T**here's no way of knowing if the 2019 San Francisco Giants have hit rock bottom, but the depth they sunk to on Friday represented a historic low.

A slumping Arizona Diamondbacks offense torched Giants pitchers Friday as they set a new record for the most runs scored by a visiting club in the history of Oracle Park in an 18-2 blowout. The Giants have suffered six lopsided defeats of five or more runs in the month of May, but Friday's demolition was in a class all by itself.

After the D'backs scored eight runs in the first four innings, the possibility of seeing infielder Pablo Sandoval pitch represented the only shred of suspense left inside Oracle Park. By the top of the seventh, the few thousand fans remaining inside the stadium at China Basin were chanting in unison, "Let Pablo Pitch!"

The Giants never did let Pablo pitch. The D'backs entered the three-game series as losers of five in a row with an offense that failed to score more than two runs in each of the team's previous four games. Against Giants pitchers Drew Pomeranz, Trevor Gott, Nick Vincent and Derek Holland, the D'backs scored at least two runs in six consecutive innings on Friday.

Giants first baseman Tyler Austin homered for the third consecutive game Friday, crushing a first-inning offering from D'backs starter Robbie Ray 421-feet to give the Giants a 2-1 lead. The advantage didn't even last a half inning, as Arizona scored 17 unanswered

RESULTS

Rockies	8-6	Orioles
Astros	4-3	Red Sox
D'backs	18-2	Giants
Rangers	4-3	Angels
A's	6-2	Mariners
Dodgers	10-2	Pirates
Reds	6-5	Cubs
Twins	11-4	White Sox
Padres	6-3	Blue Jays
Phillies	6-4	Brewers
Braves	5-2	Cardinals
Tigers	9-8	Mets
Indians	3-1	Rays
Nationals	12-10	Marlins

runs in a showing that would have made the 1927 Yankees nod in approving fashion.

Second baseman Ildemaro Vargas launched an 0-2 fastball from Pomeranz into the left field bleachers in the first, setting the tone for a D'backs offense that forced manager Bruce Bochy to go to his bullpen by the middle of the third inning. Joined by teammates Adam Jones and Nick Ahmed, Vargas was one of three D'backs hitters to finish with at least four hits on the night.

Pomeranz lasted just 2 2/3 innings while giving up eight hits and five earned runs as the veteran left-hander has battled significant command issues over the last month. Since shutting out the Blue Jays over six innings on April 24, Pomeranz has posted a 10.38 ERA in his last four starts and failed

to throw at least five innings in any of those outings.

The final straw for Pomeranz came when he allowed a two-run single in the third to Ray, who entered the night 0-for-16 on the season with nine strikeouts. Ray nearly finished with two hits, but Giants centre fielder Steven Duggar made one of the club's most impressive defensive plays of the year.

Duggar launched his body into the left centre field gap and dove headfirst to snag a looping liner off Ray's bat. The web gem aided reliever Nick Vincent, who gave up a run in his third straight outing and watched his ERA climb to 4.85 after allowing six earned runs.

There's significant question as to whether Pomeranz will make his next start as prospect Tyler Beede tossed seven innings of one-run ball for Triple-A Sacramento on Friday night. Beede has struggled in limited major league appearances, but the 2014 first round draft pick has the potential to impact the club's future. With a 21-29 record and an 11.5 game deficit in the National League West, the Giants are inching ever closer to focusing on 2020 and beyond.

Pomeranz isn't the only Giants player left to wonder about his future as left fielder Mac Williamson continued to struggle at the plate against Arizona. After becoming the fifth player in franchise history to strike out five times in the same game on Thursday, Williamson struck out three times and popped out in Friday's blowout defeat. The Giants promised Williamson an extended audition in left field after adding him to the roster on May 7, but after going 2-for-4 with 4 RBIs in his first game, Williamson is 4-for-47 with 18 strikeouts and 0-for-his-last-21.



Arizona Diamondbacks starting pitcher Robbie Ray delivers a pitch during the first inning against the San Francisco Giants at Oracle Park. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

## GOLF

# Eagle boosts Blixt to Colonial lead; Finau, Na one back

'The test is going to be this weekend. If I can have a good weekend or not'

AFP  
Los Angeles

Jonas Blixt holed out for eagle at the 17th hole on Friday on the way to a six-under par 64 and a one-shot lead in the US PGA Tour's Charles Schwab Challenge in Fort Worth, Texas.

Blixt set an early target with a bogey-free round at Colonial Country Club, where opened with back-to-back birdies and birdied two more at 12 and 13.

But the highlight of his day came at the par-four 17th, where his second shot from 132 yards out in the fairway bounced feet from the pin and rolled in for an eagle that moved him to nine-under 131 through 36 holes. Blixt posted his lowest round of the season, and said he hoped he could keep it rolling through the weekend as he pursues a fourth US tour title.

"The test is going to be this weekend," he said, "if I can have a good weekend or not."

He was one stroke in front of first-round leader Tony Finau, who followed his opening 64 with a 68, and American Kevin Na, who fired an eight-under par 62 for 132. Rory Sabbatini, who won at Colonial in 2007, fired a second-round 66 and was alone in fourth on 134.

Na, who like Blixt played in less windy morning conditions, launched his round with an eagle at the par-five first and added six birdies in another impressive display at Colonial. Na, who is not among the tour's big hitters, says the classic, compact Colonial suits his game. He fired a 62 in the first round last year and a 61 on Sunday on the way to a fourth-place finish.

"I like this golf course," Na, a three-time PGA Tour winner, said. "One of those golf courses I look forward to coming to. Fits my game. You've got to take advantage of those weeks because there is not too many golf courses like this on tour anymore."

Finau had three birdies and a bogey in his last nine holes and a 46-foot putt at the 12th - which he said kept him in it despite too many missed fairways. But he

also missed three par putts from within 10 feet. "They were kind of misreads," he said of his mid-range misses. "They weren't bad strokes, that's the difference."



Jonas Blixt of Sweden plays a shot from a bunker on the eighth hole during the second round of the Charles Schwab Challenge at Colonial Country Club in Fort Worth, Texas. (Getty Images/AFP)

## Injured Wie withdraws from US Women's Open

US golfer Michelle Wie said on Friday the nagging right wrist injury that has sidelined her since March will keep her out of the US Women's Open next week in Charleston, South Carolina. "While I'm making progress with my recovery, I have decided to withdraw from the US Women's Open," Wie, the 2014 US Open champion, said in a social media post. "It was a difficult decision to make because the US Open was one that I was

looking forward to playing in all year, but my recovery and health is the priority. Thanks so much for all the messages of support- they really keep my spirits up. I am hopeful that I'll be seeing you all back out on Tour very soon!" Wie, who has been nagged by past wrist injuries as well as neck, back, hip, knee and ankle trouble, underwent surgery in October to alleviate pain in her arthritic right wrist that had caused her

to withdraw in pain during last year's Women's British Open. But she withdrew in the first round of her title defence in the HSBC Women's World Championship in Singapore in late February. She returned for the year's first major championship, the ANA Inspiration, but missed the cut there as well as in the LPGA Lotte Championship in Hawaii before announcing she would take an indefinite amount of time off in order to get healthy.

straight made cuts end.

## LEADING SCORES

131-Jonas Blixt (SWE) 67-64  
132-Kevin Na 70-62, Tony Finau 64-68

134-Rory Sabbatini (SVK) 68-66  
135-Nick Watney 67-68, Jim Furyk 69-66, C.T. Pan (TPE) 68-67, Jordan Spieth 65-70, Jason Dufner 67-68  
136-Trey Mullinax 67-69  
137-Tyrrell Hatton (ENG) 71-66, Roger Sloan (CAN) 65-72, Ryan Palmer 68-69,  
138-Josh Teater 68-70, Martin Kaymer (GER) 73-65, Daniel Berger 71-67, Scott Piercy 70-68, Mackenzie Hughes (CAN) 68-70, Max Homa 70-68, Kevin Tway 68-70  
139-Matt Every 70-69, Brice Garnett 73-66, Russell Knox (SCO) 71-68, Austin Cook 72-67, Adam Long 70-69, Chesson Hadley 67-72, Tom Hoge 70-69, David Toms 71-68, Andrew Putnam 69-70, Emiliano Grillo (ARG) 69-70, Brian Harman 70-69, Anirban Lahiri (IND) 68-71.

## FOCUS

## Law, Song, Concolino share halfway lead at LPGA Pure Silk

AFP  
Washington

Bronte Law birdied three of her last four holes to maintain a share of the LPGA Pure Silk lead on Friday alongside Jennifer Song and Jacqui Concolino. England's Law bounced back from a bogey at the 14th with three straight birdies in a three-under par 68 at Kingsmill Resort in Williamsburg, Virginia.

That put her on nine-under par 133, level with Concolino, who fired a 67 and Song, who shared the overnight lead and like Law signed for a 68.

"It was a battle," said Law, who fought to keep pace after Song and Concolino posted solid early rounds.

"Seemed to feel like every time I would make a birdie and try and build on it I would have an unforced error a couple of holes later and make bogey and be back to where I started," added Law, who finished with six birdies and three bogeys. Song said she was "very happy" with a round that included five birdies and two bogeys.

"I managed to make great scrambles here and there and just made a couple of birdies coming in," she said. "Very happy about my round."

She and good friend Concolino played in the first group off the 10th tee. Concolino, who had five birdies and one bogey, said they fed off each other. "She made a birdie, I made a birdie," Concolino said. "She was making bird-

ies on top of me." All three of the leaders are seeking a first LPGA title. They were one stroke in front of Spain's Carlota Ciganda (65) and Sweden's Madelene Sagstrom (66). Ciganda, who had four birdies and an eagle without a bogey, said she was feeling rested after a two-week hiatus on the LPGA tour. "I feel ready to go ahead," she said.

"I was quite tired after San Francisco. I went back to Spain for two weeks and just rested, stayed with family, friends, ate some good food."

Now the top women are gearing up for their second major of the year, next week's US Women's Open in Charleston, South Carolina, where Thailand's Ariya Jutanugarn will be defending her title.

Ariya, also the defending champion this week, was six shots off the pace after a 68, joining a big group on three-under 139 that also included world number one Ko Jin-young of South Korea.

## LEADING SCORES

133 - Jacqui Concolino 66-67, Bronte Law (ENG) 65-68, Jennifer Song 65-68  
134 - Carlota Ciganda (ESP) 69-65, Madelene Sagstrom (SWE) 68-66  
135 - Nelly Korda 69-66, Ashleigh Buhai (RSA) 68-67, Nasa Hataoka (JPN) 68-67  
136 - Haru Nomura (JPN) 69-67, Chien Peiyun (TPE) 69-67, Lee6 Jeong-eun (KOR) 68-68, Angel Yin 67-69  
137 - Linnea Strom (SWE) 72-65, Park Sung-hyun (KOR) 71-66, Cheyenne Knight 70-67.

## ICE HOCKEY

## Finland stun Russia to reach world championship final

Reuters  
Bratislava

Finland ground out a shock 1-0 win over tournament favourite Russia to reach the world championship final yesterday after their captain Marko Anttila scored midway through the third period in the Ondrej Nepela Arena.

Sunday's gold-medal match will pit the Finns, who won their last world title at the same venue in 2011, against either Canada or the Czech Republic, who clash in the other semi-final later.

The Russians steamrolled into the last four with eight straight wins and scored 40 goals in the process, but an ironclad Finnish defence sti-

fled them out in a rugged contest.

Both goaltenders, Russia's Andrei Vasilevski and Finn Kevin Lankinen, pulled off a string of superb saves before Anttila swept home a rebound after Vasilevski parried Henri Jokiharju's fierce slap-shot.

Although they were on the back foot for long spells against the fast-skating Russians, Finland always looked more likely to score from lightning breaks and nearly did in the second period when Niko Ojamaki hit the post.

The Russians left an empty net in the last 90 seconds to deploy an extra forward but failed to pierce the Finnish armour as the outstanding Lankinen deflected everything the 2014 champions threw at him.

## AI SADD (B) CLINCH AMIR CUP BEACH VOLLEYBALL TITLE



AI SADD (B) (centre) receive the HH Amir Cup Beach Volleyball trophy from Qatar Volleyball Association (QVA) president Ali Ghanem al-Kuwari at the Al Gharafa Club. AI SADD (B) defeated Al Shamal (left) 2-1 in the final. Al Khor (right) finished third.

## RAMADAN CRICKET

## M. Pallonji emerge champions

M. Pallonji emerged the Division I champions of the 25th Gulf Incon-Metabo Ramadan Cricket Tournament after defeating CCRC by eight wickets in the final at old Ideal Indian School floodlit ground. Electing to bat after winning the toss, CCRC set M Pallonji a challenging target of 133 runs, with the help of Ifzal's 44 from 17 balls. Muzzamil scored 19

runs. For M. Pallonji, Sadique and Alban took two wickets each. In reply, Pallonji batsmen were never under any real pressure as Sajeev scored 32 runs in 11 balls, Sandesh made 30 in 12 while man of the match Rauf blasted 32 off just 10.

Metabo/Gulf Incon's Sajjad Ahmed Khan, Rajkumar Selvarajan, Ramesh Natarajan and Vincent Vimaldas were present at the prize distribution ceremony. QCA national coach

appointed by Asian Cricket Council Shahid Mehboob, QCA Head of Domestic Cricket Gul Khan, QCA official umpires and Qatar Veterans Cricket officials Tahir Mehmood and Naseen were the guests of honour.

## SPECIAL AWARDS

**Best batsman:** Sulfan (CCRC)  
**Best bowler:** Siraj (Hanan)  
**Best all-rounder:** Nishad (Hanan)  
**Best wicket-keeper:** Neeraj (M Pallonji)





SPOTLIGHT

# Federer returns to Roland Garros 20 years after debut

'I won here 10 years ago. It has been one of the greatest moments in my life'

DPA  
Paris

Twenty years ago, an unheralded 17-year-old Swiss named Roger Federer made his grand slam debut at the French Open, losing in four sets to then third-seed Pat Rafter in the opening round.

It was the tournament where Andre Agassi and Steffi Graf triumphed for the last time on the red clay of Paris.

Graf and Agassi went on to get married and have children, and that 1999 tournament also marked the beginning of Federer's extraordinary career, preceding 20 titles at the majors, 101 overall and cult status in tennis.

The 37-year-old returns to Roland Garros from a four-year absence, having decided to play once more on clay this season. He opens today against Italian Lorenzo Sonego.

The occasion comes 20 years after his debut, 10 years after his lone title at Roland Garros and in the dusk of his glittering career.

"I am happy to be here in Paris," he told reporters. "I started here at 20 (years ago). I won here 10 years ago. It has been one of the greatest moments in my life, so I don't know what to expect as far as the results are concerned."

Federer is certainly not the favourite. His friendly rival Rafael Nadal has dominated the tournament since 2005 with 11 titles and just two defeats – the first loss coming in 2009 against Robin Soderling. Federer beat Soderling in the final to complete his career grand slam.

But Federer revealed that Nadal's surprise defeat made it somewhat more difficult for him, saying there was a feeling of now or never in the air after losing the previous three Paris finals against the Spaniard.

"The next nine or 10 days felt like forever," he said. "Instead of the tournament becoming easier, it was going to become more



Switzerland's Roger Federer attends a training session on the eve of the start of the French Open in Paris yesterday. (Reuters)

difficult because of the pressure. "But it was nevertheless interesting, and I felt better, and I feel proud that I was able to manage the pressure."

Federer has titles from Dubai and Miami this season. On clay, he reached the Madrid and Rome quarter-finals, pulling out in Italy as a precaution after having to play two matches in one day.

He has not played at Roland Garros since his 2015 quarter-final defeat against current world number one Novak Djokovic. He compared the situation to that of the 2017 Australian Open,

which he won after half a year on the sidelines with a knee injury.

"In some ways I feel similar to maybe the Australian Open in '17. A bit of the unknown," Federer said.

"I feel like I'm playing good tennis, but is it enough or is it enough against the absolute top guys when it really comes to the crunch? I'm not sure if it's in my racquet, you know."

"But I hope I can get myself in that position deep down in the tournament against the top guys."

Federer said he won't underestimate the 73rd-ranked Sonego

ahead of their centre court meeting, naming him "someone who knows how to play on the clay."

French organizers are delighted to have Federer back as a top attraction, tweeting, "Welcome back to Roland Garros" when he had his first practice session earlier in the week.

Federer said he has trained well and has gotten used to the different body aches the play on clay provides compared to hard or grass courts.

But he has also had some time for distractions in the French capital. He was seen at an event

of a famous champagne maker in an elegant dark blue suit together with supermodel Kate Moss and actresses Uma Thurman and Natalie Portman.

That also shows the long way he has come since that first-round match 20 years ago against Rafter.

"I was really happy to play against Rafter, who was one of the most popular players on the tour. He had this aura, being nice, fair play," he said.

"So it was great being able to play him on the Suzanne Lenglen Court rather than on Court 23... It was a great experience for me."

ANTICIPATION

## Rested, Andreescu relishing French Open debut

Reuters  
London

Injury breaks are not usually welcomed by tennis players but when Bianca Andreescu's shoulder began troubling her in Miami it offered her the chance to take stock of a stunning breakthrough.

The 18-year-old Canadian became the first wildcard to win the Indian Wells title the week before – a feat that shook the tennis world and had Rod Laver remarking that a star had been born.

Andreescu has only played in two Grand Slams and at the start of the year said just making the French Open main draw was her goal. She will debut as the 22nd seed.

When she takes on 20-year-old Czech Marie Bouzkova it will be her first match on clay this season and her first anywhere since a sore shoulder forced her to retire in her last 16 clash with Anett Kontaveit in Miami.

It ended the incredible 10-match winning streak that has catapulted the Ontario-born Andreescu into the big time.

"I think the injury helped me in the way that I could have the chance to let everything soak in and spend time with my family and friends," Andreescu, whose exploits have trumped those of compatriots and close friends Denis Shapovalov and Felix Auger-Aliassime, told Reuters in a phone interview.

"I have amazing family and friends and they really helped me stay grounded because the media when I got home were all over me. It was certainly a different feeling but I'm getting used to it slowly but surely."

Andreescu says her shoulder is ready to go in Paris, having opted to skip the warm-up tournaments and head to Mallorca to tune up her claycourt game at the Rafael Nadal Academy.

"I'm completely healed," she

said. "It was a wide decision because if I had continued the tear could have got worse."

"The facilities at Rafa's academy were amazing, really good physios, really good food, the people were nice and they accommodated me really well."

"On my days off I could just stroll around and get my mind off the game and focus on relaxing which was really helpful. It was a good two-week period and I feel that I needed that."

Andreescu, who moved back to her parents' native Romania soon after she was born, says her career has been a "crazy ride" since returning to Canada to become part of the development programme that produced Milos Raonic, Eugenie Bouchard, Auger-Aliassime and Shapovalov.

"Happy days for Canadian tennis," she said. "We are just feeding off each other's success and energy. I played juniors with Felix and Denis, we grew up together and just seeing them, all of us doing well at the same time, it's just incredible."

"Tennis Canada is doing a great job. Without them I wouldn't be here today. I'm so grateful. I can't begin to repay them."

TITLE RUN

Andreescu's title run in Indian Wells began slowly but she soon got on a roll, beating seeds Dominica Cibulkova and Qiang Wang before obliterating former French Open and Wimbledon champion Garbine Muguruza 6-0 6-1.

In the final she downed reigning Wimbledon champion Angelique Kerber, banked the \$1.3 mn winner's cheque and celebrated with a burger.

Unsurprisingly, she names Romanian Simona Halep as one of her inspirations, and said it was a chat with the current French Open champion in 2016 that launched her career.

"She told me I should stop playing juniors and focus on the pros. That was a really good decision."



FOCUS

## Gloom surrounds French tennis ahead of Roland Garros



Reuters  
Paris

A combination of injuries, a lack of confidence and poor results mean there is a little chance of a French player shining at Roland Garros this year let alone claiming a title that has eluded the country's men since 1983 and the women since 2000.

When Lucas Pouille reached the semi-finals at the Australian Open in January, French hopes were raised that they might finally have a player who could be a force to be reckoned with at the majors.

Yet Amelie Mauresmo's protégé then went three months without winning a match until he claimed the title at a second-tier Challenger tournament in Bordeaux in May.

Last year, none of France's men went past the third round and only the 16th-ranked Gael

Monfils appears to have a chance of surpassing that this season. Yet the flamboyant Monfils, who won in Rotterdam in February, has been hampered by injuries.

Tournament director Guy Forget put on a brave face when asked about French hopes at Roland Garros this year.

"They can play the surprise card. Because of their experience in the Grand Slams, Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, Richard Gasquet, Gael (Monfils) and even Lucas Pouille, can have hope," said Forget.

Forget did not mention the enigmatic Benoit Paire but the 30-year-old, who has not always seen eye-to-eye with French tennis authority, might be the country's best hope.

On the women's side, Caroline Garcia made the fourth round last year but had struggled to reach the latter stages in any tournament this season until she reached the final in Strasbourg, where she lost to Dayana Yastremska yesterday.

ROUND-UP

## Paire sets up French Open campaign with Lyon win

Agencies  
Lyon

With the French Open starting today, Benoit Paire offered some home encouragement as he brushed aside Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-4, 6-3 in the final of the Lyon clay-court event.

The 30-year-old also won at Marrakech in April and will climb to 38th in the ATP rankings on Monday, when he also takes on Romania's Marius Copil in the Roland Garros first round.

No Frenchman has lifted the French Open since Yannick Noah's iconic victory in 1983.

"I started the season a little bit bad with some injuries... so it was not easy at the beginning," Paire said.

"But I feel much better now. I feel good on court, I feel very confident. When you feel confident, you can win a lot of matches against good players."

PUTINTSEVA WINS HER MAIDEN TITLE

Kazakhstan's Yulia Putintseva came back from a set down to beat unseeded Tamara Zidansek of Slovenia 4-6 6-4 6-2 and capture her first WTA singles title at the Nuremberg Cup on Saturday.

Top seed Putintseva converted six break points in all to finally win her first title in the third final of her career.

"It's unbelievable, honestly. I enjoyed myself and I was fight-



ing until the end," she said. "It was a great fight, a great game for the final."

"Honestly, it was a little bit of luck, because I was running and hoping the ball was going to go in. When I was out of position, I was running and hit some incredible shots."

The 24-year-old Putintseva, who lost in the St Petersburg final in 2017 and Guangzhou final

last year, had been defeated by Zidansek in the pair's only previous meeting in another three-setter in Morocco earlier this season.

It was Zidansek who broke a visibly angry Putintseva to take the first set but the Kazakh, twice a quarter-finalist at the French Open, gathered her composure to win the final two sets, dominating the third to bag the title.

"It is my best result this year, so no matter what happened today, I played well," Zidansek said. "I'm going to go from Nuremberg with my head held high."

Putintseva will not have much time to celebrate her victory though, as she heads straight to Roland Garros where she takes on Sweden's Rebecca Peterson in the first round of the French Open, while Zidansek faces Bel-

gium's Elise Mertens.

THIRD TITLE FOR YASTREMSKA

Ukraine's Dayana Yastremska beat France's Caroline Garcia 6-4 5-7 7-6(3) in an thrilling match to win her third WTA singles title at the Strasbourg International yesterday.

Yastremska saved a championship point on her way to the title with the 19-year-old putting on a fearsome display of firepower in a match lasting a minute short of three hours.

"You've always been my idol, thank you for this match," Yastremska said. "I was here two years ago and I lost in the first round. I almost lost at match point today but I'm happy to win."

Garcia took an early lead in the opening set but Yastremska fought back to level at 3-3 with powerful baseline shots.

The Ukrainian stepped up her game to take the set with a mixture of baseline rallies and occasionally coming to the net to outfox her opponent.

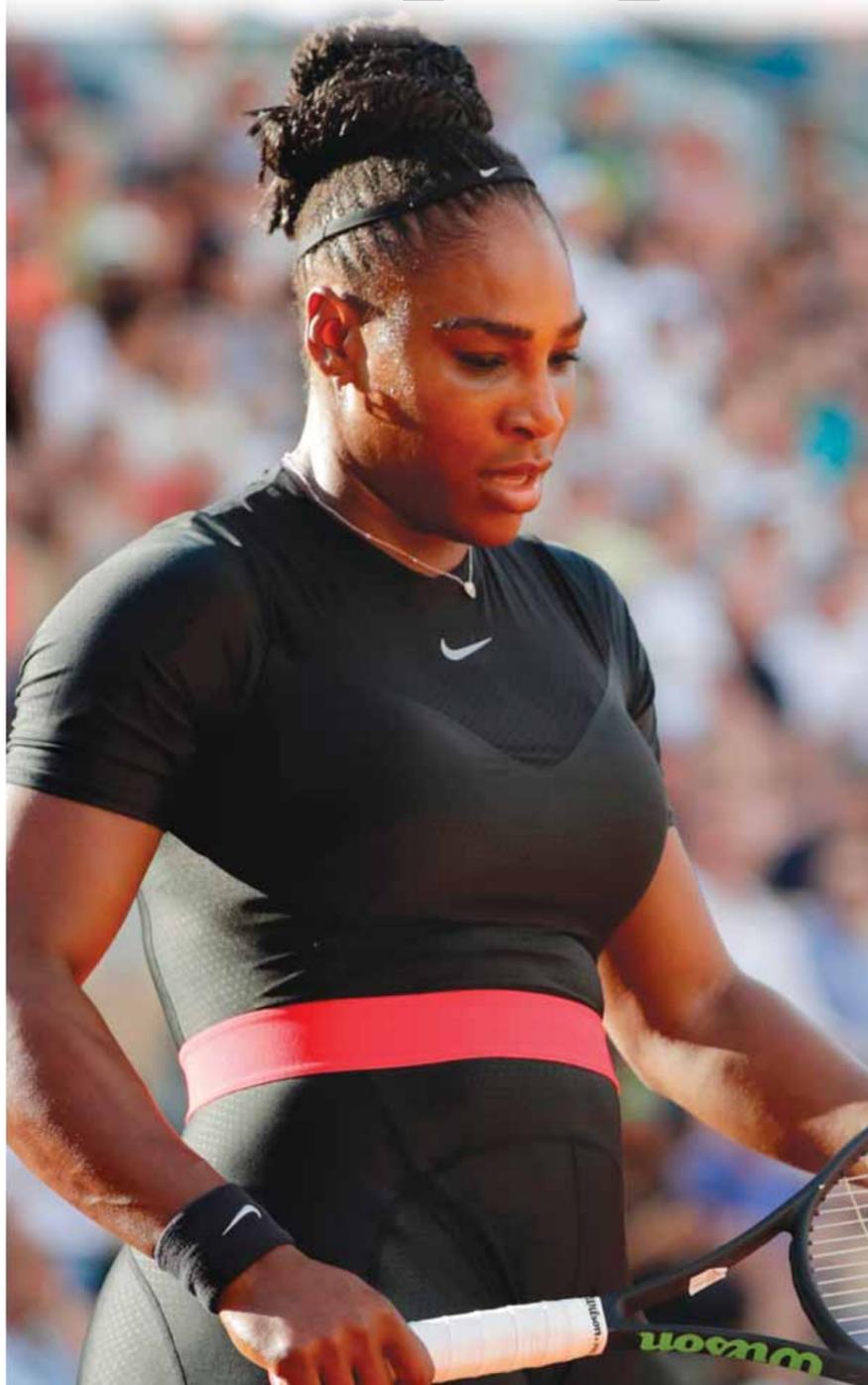
Yastremska's devastating forehand kept her in control in the second set and she held a 5-3 lead which gave her a chance to serve for the title.

Garcia saved two championship points, however, and forced a deciding set as Yastremska double-faulted.

After a tense final set Yastremska dominated the tiebreaker to join Kiki Bertens, Karolina Pliskova and Petra Kvitova as the only women to have won two titles this year.

FOCUS

# For the unsinkable Serena, the last step is proving the hardest



Coming back from childbirth was always going to be her biggest challenge, but the baggage of trying to become the all-time great is proving a formidable haul even for Serena

By Tumaini Carayol  
The Guardian

Eight years ago, the documentary *Venus and Serena* followed the Williams sisters as they tried to survive the nadir of their careers. Venus prepared to do battle with Sjogren's syndrome, while Serena plotted her way back from the first pulmonary embolism that had nearly killed her. During a quiet moment of the documentary, a quick break in the middle of practice, Serena noted to no one in particular that she had returned to the top 10 of the rankings. Isha, her sister, frowned and then responded with the question that has consumed all followers of the sport for 21 years: "Girl, how can you and Venus keep in the top 10 and y'all never play?"

The question remains unanswered. This week, Williams returned to the top 10 for the second time this year, one year after her first grand slam competition following maternity leave. It is absurd. She has completed only one tournament in 2019, the Australian Open, withdrawing after one match in her last three events. Over the past 52 weeks, she has only completed five events. For much of her career, she loomed as large over the tour in her absence as when she was there, but now her absence seems normal. The sport goes on.

For any other player in history, returning to the top 10 from a life-threatening childbirth at 37 years old would be hailed as the singular miracle it is. The journey is even more impressive. Williams returned in March 2018 as a shadow of herself.

Her footwork was non-existent. She could barely find the middle of her strings. Serena has played many bad matches in her career, but it was jarring to conclude that her horrendous play was her

actual level, not just her form. She was bundled out of successive tournaments by older sister Venus and her younger imitator Naomi Osaka. Neither match was close.

Serena strode from the courts and straight out of the Miami Open after her loss to Osaka, foregoing press and most human interaction. The HBO docuseries *Being Serena* chronicled the aftermath of that tournament, as she withdrew from subsequent events and desperately tried to shed her baby weight.

She agonized over the decision to stop breastfeeding her daughter, at one point sitting down for a meeting with her coach, Patrick Mouratoglou, who barked two words at her, loud and clear: "Stop. Breastfeeding." In tears, Serena fumbled as she tried to explain the difficulty of returning her postnatal body to full fitness.

It was important to see a Serena unrecognizable from the warrior on the court, and to understand the effort it has taken for her to return. This was always going to be the toughest challenge of her career and that is all it has been. It wasn't until she made her slam return at Roland Garros one year ago that she finally awoke, roaring back from a set and a break down to Ashleigh Barty. By the end of the summer, Serena had reached the finals of Wimbledon and the US Open.

Despite the sparsity of her recent appearances, they have included some Williams' most traumatic losses of her career.

In the US Open final, Williams received a game penalty and then cried as victory slipped from her. No match in recent decades has been so uncomfortably thrust into public debate. In this year's Australian Open, Serena led 5-1 in the third set of her quarter-final against Karolina Pliskova.

On match point and seemingly cruising to victory, she foot faulted and then twisted her ankle during the point.

Completely shaken, she lost six games in a row and failed to win another point on her serve. Serena departed with her head bowed and the crowd stunned.

Williams turns 38 in September. Time will eventually catch up with her. Her recent injury issues seem to make this clear, as does the additional step she seems to have lost in her movement.

But her issues are mental more than physical. Age is often presented as a mental asset for an athlete and experience can help to navigate matches, but you can know too much. The pain of defeat can be too familiar.

Her additional nerves have been conspicuous in big matches for a while now. For the first 21 years of her career she was 21-4 in slam finals, but in the past three now she is 2-4. After her loss to Pliskova, Serena asserted that she needed to remember how to "go psycho" and "bananas" in the biggest moments of future matches, to never hold back again. That she needed to say it aloud really speaks volumes – on the tennis court, being psycho is normally her essence.

The other players are watching, and they are emboldened.

Though they accept that she is a much better tennis player, they have far too much self-respect to fear someone who is as human as the next name in the draw: "She has all the respect from me, but I can beat her, so I'm not worried about her," Pliskova told the *New York Times* before their US Open clash last year. "She has a big game, but sometimes she behaves bigger than her game is."

Think back to Venus and Serena – back when Serena was still on 13 slams. She was already an all-time great, but she was without the baggage of trying to become the all-time great. She was already exhaustingly famous, but she hadn't danced in a Beyoncé video, presented at the Oscars or become the cultural institution that sometimes seems so suffocating today. She always had to deal with obscene amounts of pressure and significance that people insisted on attaching to her wins, but she still seemed to savour her wins for what they were.

Now she usually refers to her slams in their numerical form, all part of a wider narrative with the end goal always on the mind.

The next slam for Serena Williams is 24 – the number of Margaret Court's overall slam record. It's hard to imagine that she won't get there, but it's fair to wonder what chasing this level of greatness does to your perspective when nothing but victory is acceptable. During a quiet practice on a court somewhere this week, one can hope that, eight years on, she is still able to tell nobody in particular that she is back in the top 10, and to recognize an achievement that may not be what she is chasing but is still valid and good.

FOCUS

## Who are you? Guide to Roland Garros stars' first round rivals

AFP  
Paris

With Roland Garros starting today, here's a look at the players attempting to shock six of the biggest stars in the first round:

**Hubert Hurkacz**

v Novak Djokovic  
(world number one, 2016 Roland Garros champion, 15-time major winner)

**Head-to-head:** First meeting  
**Hurkacz's Roland Garros best:** 2nd rd, 2018



Poland's Hubert Hurkacz will play world No 1 Novak Djokovic.

The 22-year-old Polish world number 43 is a low-key figure off court but when he's playing he has a "rip your heart out, this assassin type of energy" said his coach Craig Boynton, who counts former number one and Slam winner Jim Courier among his previous pupils. Hurkacz thrives on hard courts. He reached the quarter-finals at Indian Wells where he beat Kei Nishikori and Denis Shapovalov before losing to Roger Federer. A week later, he knocked world number four Dominic Thiem out of Miami. On clay this spring, his best run was a third round slot in Madrid having come through qualifying.

**Yannick Hanfmann**

v Rafael Nadal  
(world number two, 11-time winner)

at Roland Garros and defending champion, 17-time major winner)  
**Head-to-head:** First meeting  
**Hanfmann's Roland Garros best:** 1st rd, 2019



Hanfmann is 27 years old and ranked at a lowly 184 in the world having turned professional relatively late in his career after a four-year US college stint in which he helped the University

of Southern California win two national titles. Having made it through qualifying in Paris, his match against 11-time champion Rafael Nadal will be his first on the main tour this year. Has never won a main draw match at the Slams and his form reflects that statistic. In 2019, he has earned just \$3,600 while world number two Nadal has banked \$3.7mn in the same period.

**Lorenzo Sonego**

v Roger Federer  
(world number three, 2009 Roland Garros champion and 20-time major winner)

**Head-to-head:** First meeting  
**Sonego's Roland Garros best:** 1st rd, 2019

Sonego, a 24-year-old Italian, is ranked 73 and is a potential



Slovakia's Anna Karolina Schmiedlova will play No 1 Naomi Osaka.

banana skin for Federer having made the quarter-finals at the Monte Carlo Masters this year after qualifying. He was also in the last-eight on clay at Marrakech. Sonego fell in qualifying at Roland Garros in 2018 while best run at a Slam was a second round appearance at the 2018 US Open.

**Anna Karolina Schmiedlova**

v Naomi Osaka  
(world number one and reigning US and Australian Open champion, two-time major winner)

**Head-to-head:** First meeting  
**Schmiedlova's Roland Garros best:** 3rd rd 2015

A former top 30 player, the 24-year-old Schmiedlova is now at 92 in the world but boasts

solid form at Roland Garros having defeated Venus Williams on her way to the third round in 2015. The Slovak also has three titles – two on clay – and has been a runner-up on two occasions including at Hobart in January.

**Ajla Tomljanovic**

v Simona Halep  
(world number three, defending Roland Garros champion)

**Head-to-head:** Halep leads 1-0  
**Tomljanovic's Roland Garros best:** 4th rd 2014

Born in Croatia but now an Australian citizen, the 26-year-old Tomljanovic is ranked 47 in the world. A four-time finalist on the WTA Tour. Reached the fourth round in Paris

in 2014, beating former champion Francesca Schiavone in the first round and third-seeded Agnieszka Radwanska in the last 32. Defending Roland Garros champion Halep won the pair's only previous encounter, coming from a set down in Cincinnati last year.

**Vitalia Diatchenko**

v Serena Williams  
(world number 10, former number one, 2002, 2013, 2015 Roland Garros champion, 23-time major winner)

**Head-to-head:** Williams leads 1-0  
**Diatchenko's Roland Garros best:** 2nd rd 2015

best: 2nd rd 2015

Diatchenko is a 28-year-old Russian, ranked at 82 in the world, but with the capability to shock the big names, famously beating Maria Sharapova in the first round at Wimbledon in a three-hour epic last year. Diatchenko has been plagued by injuries, particularly with ligament and Achilles setbacks. She admits that she returned from surgery too rapidly at the US Open in 2015 where she was forced to retire from her first round match – against Serena Williams.



Russia's Vitalia Diatchenko will take on Serena Williams.