

ENERTECH QATAR
SAFETY TRAINING CENTRE

Qatar's Largest International Qualifications & Awards Provider

www.enertechqatar.com

P +974 4401 0888 F +974 4401 0889

Facebook

EnertechQatar

admin@enertechqatar.com



GOLF | Page 4

Na claims third US PGA Tour title at Colonial

GARMIN

beat yesterday.

Tel: 4498 6498 / E-mail: sales@lingawi.net

web: www.garminqatar.com

ALZAMAN
EXCHANGE W.L.L.

Your Global Remittance Partner

| | | | |
|--------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| MAIN BRANCH | LULU HYPER | SANAYYA | ALKHOR |
| MATAR QADEEM | MANSOURA | ABU HAMOUR | BIN OMRAN |

alzmanexchange.com www.alzmanexchange.com L4441448

Tuesday, May 28, 2019
Ramadan 23, 1440 AH

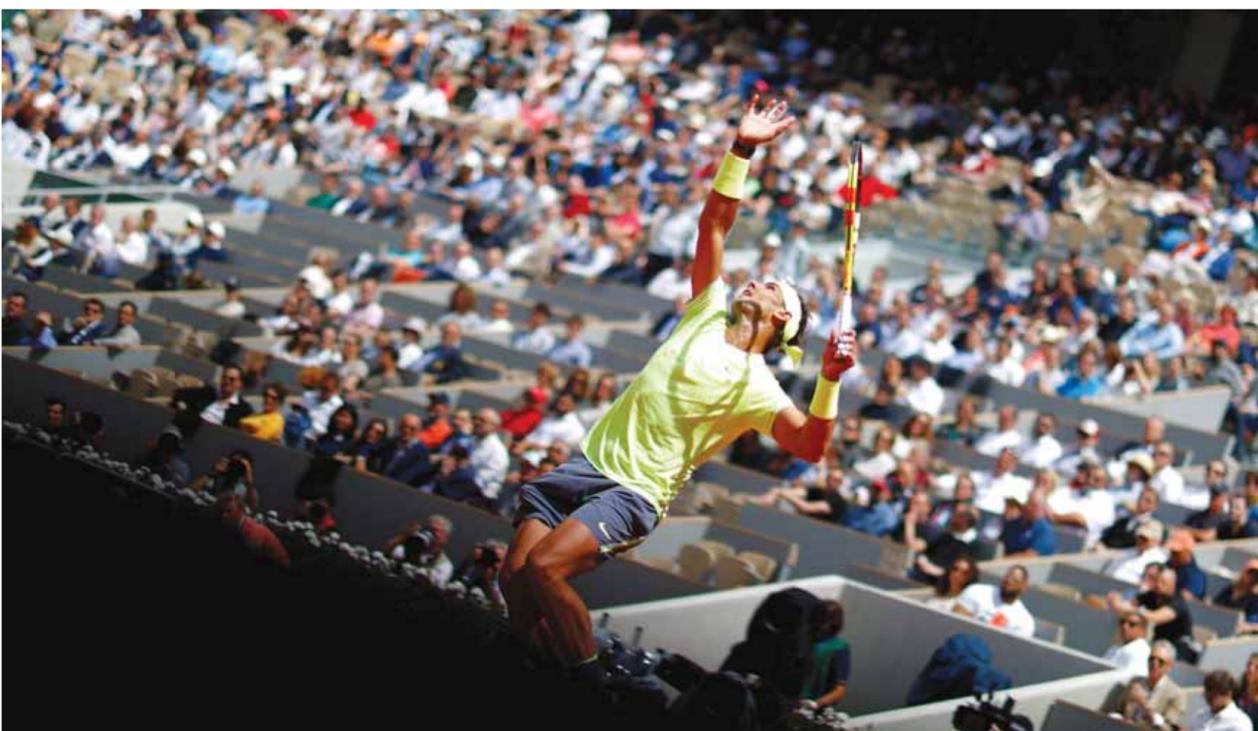
GULF TIMES SPORT



TENNIS

Serena survives scare in Paris, wins 800th match

Page 2



Spain's Rafael Nadal in action during his first round match against Germany's Yannick Hanfmann in Paris yesterday. He won in straight sets.

TENNIS/ FRENCH OPEN

Nadal, Djokovic cruise through at Roland Garros

'IT'S ALWAYS AMAZING TO PLAY HERE, THE NEW CHATRIER IS VERY NICE'

AFP
Paris

Defending champion Rafael Nadal got his bid for a record-extending 12th French Open title off to the perfect start by brushing aside German qualifier Yannick Hanfmann, while world number one Novak Djokovic was also a comfortable victor in the first round at Roland Garros on Monday.

Nadal, a 17-time Grand Slam champion, cruised to a 6-2, 6-1, 6-3 victory on the rebuilt Court Philippe Chatrier to set up a clash with another German qualifier - world number 114 Yannick Maden - in round two.

Nadal had suffered three consecutive semi-final defeats earlier in the clay-court season, but appeared to find his best in an Italian Open title success sealed with victory over old rival Djokovic, while his French Open win-loss record now reads 87-2.

"It's always amazing to play here, the new Chatrier is very nice," the second seed said. "It's been an important place in my career."

"I played a good tournament in Rome which was very important for my confidence. Now we'll see."

The 32-year-old Nadal raced into a 3-0 lead in the opening set before a second break of serve in the eighth game sealed it after



Serbia's Novak Djokovic in action during his first round match against Poland's Hubert Hurkacz.

just 40 minutes. The second set was over in a flash as Nadal crushed nine winners past his beleaguered opponent. The winning line honed into

view when Nadal broke after a lengthy game to take a 2-1 advantage in the third, and the Spaniard completed the job on his first match point as world number 184 Hanfmann blasted long.

Djokovic laid down an early marker in his bid to hold all four Grand Slam titles simultaneously for the second time, powering past Polish youngster Hubert Hurkacz.

The 15-time major champion impressed in a 6-4, 6-2, 6-2 triumph and will face Swiss lucky loser Henri Laaksonen in round two.

"I was very solid. I'm happy with my game today," said the top seed. "It's a long tournament... But I just want to concentrate on my next match."

Twelve months ago, Djokovic dropped out of the world's top 20 after a shock quarter-final loss to Marco Cecchinato and even pondered skipping Wimbledon, but he has instead reclaimed his place at the top of the game.

The 22-year-old Hurkacz, who has claimed three wins over top-10 players this season, had no answer to the 2016 French Open winner, as Djokovic sealed a second-round spot without breaking sweat, hitting 27 winners. Earlier yesterday, former world number one Caroline Wozniacki collapsed to a 0-6, 6-3, 6-3 loss to Russian world number 68 Veronika Kudermertova in the first round.

The Danish 13th seed had retired injured from her two previous matches in the lead-up to Roland Garros, and fell away badly after a strong first set.

"I think she got very lucky at the start of the second set and took advantage of the opportunities she got," said Wozniacki.

Sixth seed and two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova was forced to pull out before her scheduled opener against Sorana Cirstea with a left arm injury, but said she should be fit for Wimbledon, which starts on July 1.

"(I'll be out for) two to three weeks, so I'll do some fitness and everything that I can do to prepare my body for the tennis on the grass," said the Czech.

Dutch fourth seed Kiki Bertens looked in fine fettle, though, beating home player Pauline Parmentier 6-3, 6-4.

Elsewhere in the women's draw, Australian eighth seed Ashleigh Barty saw off American Jessica Pegula 6-3, 6-3. In the men's event, three-time Grand Slam champion Stan Wawrinka progressed with a 6-1, 6-7 (3/7), 6-2, 6-3 win over Slovakian Jozef Kovalik.

Australian Alex De Minaur, seeded 21st, beat the United States' Bradley Klahn 6-1, 6-4, 6-4, although Georgian 15th seed Nikoloz Basilashvili and Russian 12th seed Daniil Medvedev both exited the tournament.

SPOTLIGHT

Villa win 'richest game' in football

AFP
London

An Aston Villa side managed by one life-long fan in Dean Smith and captained by another in Jack Grealish ended their three-year exile from the Premier League yesterday with a 2-1 win over Derby County in the Championship playoff final at Wembley.

A year after losing to Fulham in the same fixture, Villa were celebrating a return to English football's lucrative top-flight that will be worth at least £170mn (\$216mn) and as much as £200mn (\$253mn) to the Birmingham club.

Anwar El Ghazi put Villa ahead with a header on the stroke of half-time before John McGinn capitalised on a goal-keeping error to score Villa's second just shy of the hour mark.

Derby substitute Jack Marriott ensured a nervous finish for Villa with a goal nine minutes from time but it could not prevent County losing in the play-offs for the fourth time in six seasons. For Smith, whose father is suffering from dementia, this was a poignant victory.

"I went to see my old man on Friday and I managed to get his eyes open for two minutes and I said to him 'next time you see me I'm going to be a Premier League manager,'" Smith told Sky Sports. "He smiled and nodded, for me that's enough."

Meanwhile an elated Grealish said: "I'm speechless. It was such a hard game, but when I look around and I've got John, Anwar, I believe. It means the world to go up, we know where this club belongs."

"I've stayed here and we're back there now. I've led my boyhood team to the Premier League."

El Ghazi added: "We know and felt the pressure. This club has to be in the Premier League and it deserves to be there."

Rams boss Frank Lampard, in his first season as a manager, re-

called former Chelsea and England teammate Ashley Cole as well as Tom Huddlestone into his starting side.

Cole replaced suspended Scott Malone at left-back, while midfielder Huddlestone took over from Duane Holmes, injured in the semi-final victory over Leeds.

Villa's Smith, made one un-enforced change by bringing in winger Albert Adomah instead of Andre Green, who dropped down to the bench.

Smith's side, who had already put seven goals past Derby without reply in two regular season league meetings this season, were much the better side for the first half.

And their dominance was duly rewarded a minute before the interval when a precise cross by Egypt's Ahmed Elmohamady evaded the Derby defence and allowed Netherlands Under-21 international El Ghazi, who had lost his marker, to run in at the far post and score with a stooping header.

It was a goal celebrated by the massed ranks of Villa fans at Wembley that included Britain's Prince William.

Villa doubled their lead in the 59th minute.

El Ghazi's shot was deflected high into the air and Derby goalkeeper Kelle Roos, who waited for the ball to drop so he could complete a catch instead of attempting a punch, was left floundering as McGinn steered the ball into the net.

But at 2-0 down, a desperate Derby raised their game and pulled a goal back nine minutes from time.

Florian Jozefzoon's cross was nodded back in by Jayden Bogle, and substitute Marriott rolled a shot into the far corner, although Martyn Waghorn may have got the very last touch.

Injuries and stoppages meant Villa, the 1982 European champions, had to come through seven minutes of additional time.

But they held their nerve to join Norwich City and Sheffield United in next season's Premier League.



Aston Villa's Mile Jedinak and assistant manager John Terry celebrate with the trophy after winning the playoff against Derby County.



CLOSE SHAVE

Serena survives scare in first round

'I made lots of mistakes in the first set and I just said 'good luck, Serena'

AFP
Paris

Serena Williams survived a first-set scare before defeating Russia's Vitalia Diatchenko 2-6, 6-1, 6-0 to reach the second round of the French Open yesterday.

The 37-year-old American, who is attempting to equal Margaret Court's all-time record of 24 Grand Slam titles, racked up her 800th career main draw win with her victory in front of a half-full Court Philippe Chatrier.

"There is always a lot fear for a first round match," said Williams who eventually raced to victory, taking 12 of the last 13 games.

"I made lots of mistakes in the first set and I just said 'good luck, Serena'."

"I was strong after that... now I feel like I need to go and practice."

Williams, the 2002, 2013 and 2015 champion in Paris, will face either Japan's Kurumi Nara or Dalila Jakupovic of Slovenia for a place in the last 32.

Williams won her most recent major at the Australian Open in 2017 while pregnant.

She returned to Grand Slam tennis after giving birth to her daughter at Roland Garros in



Serena Williams of the US serves the ball to Russia's Vitalia Diatchenko during their first round match on day two of French Open yesterday.

2018, making the last 16 where she had been set to resume her bitter rivalry with Maria Sharapova.

An arm injury torpedoed that meeting and stalled her assault on a fourth title in Paris.

Defeat in the 2018 Wimbledon final and US Open championship match, where her

now-infamous meltdown overshadowed Naomi Osaka's title triumph, followed her Paris heartbreak.

Her Australian Open campaign in January ended in a quarter-final loss to Karolina Pliskova despite having led 5-1 in the final set and holding four match points.

Since Melbourne, Williams had been unable to finish the three tournaments she had entered — retiring in the third round of Indian Wells and withdrawing after winning a round in Miami, and after winning one round in Rome due to a right knee injury.

Yesterday, the 83rd-ranked

Diatchenko, who knocked Maria Sharapova out of Wimbledon last year, broke Williams twice in the opening set in the fifth and seventh games, claiming the opener on a third set point.

Williams fired four aces in the set but also 14 unforced errors.

Suddenly, she was staring at only her second first round loss at a Slam after her 2012 defeat in Paris by Virginie Razzano.

But she stormed back to level the encounter, cutting the errors by half and breaking in the second and sixth games of the set.

She swept through the decider, breaking in the first, third and fifth games.

One year after her 'Black Panther' catsuit caused controversy, Williams returned to Roland Garros, dressed in a zebra-striped cape emblazoned with the words 'mother, champion, queen, goddess' all translated into French in a nod to her hosts.

Once the cape was removed, Williams revealed a black and white zebra-stripe print dress.

She fell foul of tournament organisers last year with her one-piece black outfit which she said she needed to wear to boost her circulation.

Williams had suffered life-threatening blood clots when she gave birth to her daughter Alexis Olympia in 2017.

FOCUS

'Frustrated' Wozniacki says opponent got 'lucky' in Roland Garros win

AFP
Paris

Former world number one **Caroline Wozniacki** was left "frustrated" after collapsing to a 0-6, 6-3, 6-3 loss to Russian world number 68 Veronika Kudermetova yesterday and told her opponent she "got lucky".

The Danish 13th seed had retired injured from her two previous matches in the lead-up to Roland Garros, but looked to have found form in a one-sided opening set.

Last year's Australian Open champion lost her way in the second set, though, making 10 unforced errors, but said her opponent was fortunate to turn the match around.

"I think she got very lucky at the start of the second set and took advantage of the op-



portunities she got," said Wozniacki.

"I ran out of steam in the end and made some unforced errors that I don't usually do, so that was very frustrating.

"She had a few net chords and good shots on some of the important points at the start of the second set.

"It's definitely frustrating. You want to win, you work hard and you want to see results.

"It hasn't been a great year for me so far, so I'm going to work hard and try and turn it around."

The 22-year-old Kudermetova cruised to victory in the decider on a sparsely-populated Court Philippe Chatrier to claim the biggest win of her career.

She will face either Kazakhstan's Zarina Diyas or French wildcard Audrey Albie in the second round, having only made her main-draw debut at a Grand Slam event with a first-round Australian Open loss in January.

"I was a little bit nervous at the start of the match, but I

took it game by game and tried to be more aggressive," said the Russian. For Wozniacki now, her focus will turn to the grass-court season, in which she has struggled in the past — never having reached the Wimbledon quarter-finals.

"I haven't had the best lead-up to this tournament," she said. "I had a calf injury so haven't really been able to play or practise for a couple of weeks. My calf now feels good so that's a positive so I'm definitely going to go back and work hard and get ready for the grass season."

It was the first time Wozniacki had lost in the opening round of a Grand Slam tournament since Wimbledon three years ago.

"I just have to try and stay positive, and obviously it's not as easy to stay positive when things aren't going your way," she added.

SPOTLIGHT

Black and white's all right for stylish Barty

Reuters
Paris

Australian eighth seed Ashleigh Barty is not known for extravagant outfits, preferring to let her tennis do the talking on court, but she made an impression on both counts as she began her French Open campaign in style yesterday.

Barty was far too good for American Jessica Pegula, winning 6-3 6-3 on Roland Garros's so-called bullring court kitted out in a black and white striped zebra kit.

"I don't mind it. I think it looks pretty good against the clay," Miami champion Barty told reporters of her new Fila kit.

"It's very cool. They've kind of released it sporadically over the year. I think it pops."

"I picked it up and I was like, oh wow! Obviously when I put it on, it's not as out there as I thought it would be. But I'm happy to wear whatever."

The 23-year-old Queenslander has enjoyed a stunning year so far, reaching the quarter-finals of the Australian Open then claiming the best title of her career in Miami. There was a slight concern when she pulled out of the Strasbourg tournament last week with an arm injury but she showed no sign of it against Pegula.

Barty has never been past the second round in five previous visits to the French Open



Australia's Ashleigh Barty plays a forehand return to Jessica Pegula in Paris yesterday.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Teenager Parry triggers Mauresmo comparison in Paris

Reuters
Paris

One victory at the French Open and a single-handed backhand was all it took for 16-year-old wildcard **Diane Parry** to draw comparisons with former world number one and fellow Frenchwoman Amelie Mauresmo.

Parry, ranked 457th in the WTA rankings, beat Belarusian world number 102 Vera Lapko 6-2 6-4 to advance into the second round. It was her first win in the main draw of a Grand Slam or WTA event.

The result was a welcome win for French women at Roland Garros yesterday after both Pauline Parmentier and Alize Cornet were sent packing.

Parry, who grew up on the edge of Roland Garros in Boulogne-Billancourt, was immediately asked if she was like Mauresmo considering she also plays with a single-handed backhand.

"It's Amelie Mauresmo that taught me. I love it. I'm very happy to have a one-handed backhand," she said.

"I'm one of the very few players to have one, so I stand out thanks to this."

Parry usually goes to train in the neighbouring Centre National d'Entrainement with an electric scooter. Yesterday, she made an exception, allowing her mother to drive her to the stadium. "I tried to approach this match as a run-of-the-mill match so as not to have too much pressure on my shoulders," she explained.

"I tried to roll out my usual game. I tried not to think about

but with her confidence soaring she seems primed to rectify that record this year.

"A little bit scratchy, but solid enough when I needed it," was her verdict after her victory. "I think overall, not knowing Jess overly well, I was able to figure it out when I needed to."

"There were moments in the match when it was tighter, but I was able to be really solid again and do the basics well."

While Barty, and former runner-up Sam Stosur, will shoulder Australian women's hopes, Alex De Minaur, the men's 21st seed, scored his first French Open main draw victory yesterday to snap a five-match losing streak dating back to February.

The 20-year-old has been struggling to overcome a groin injury on the slippery European claycourts, but he was in commanding form to beat Bradley Klahn 6-1 6-4 6-4 on Monday.

"To be able to finally sort of end this drought I've been having, it hasn't been easy," he told reporters.

"I really felt like I needed a win just for me personally and mentally. Things hadn't really gone my way, but it's good to see the results finally get back. And to be back at 100%, that the main thing."

"It was safe to say that I was very pumped to start today."

De Minaur will face a stern test of his form and fitness in round two against Spain's 57th ranked Pablo Carreno Busta.



the fact that it was a big match in the French Open. I tried to be as cool and relaxed as possible."

Being the youngest female French player to win a match in the main draw here since a then 15-year-old Cornet in 2005, Parry now has to deal with the weight of expectations.

"It's true that there are expectations. We're French. We play at the French Open. There are expectations," said Parry.

"I'm trying not to think about this and to focus on my game and what I have to do. I try not to think about everything around me and what other people might think."

She next faces Belgian 20th seed Elise Mertens or Slovenian Tamara Zidansek.

BOTTOMLINE

'I can make history again': Novak eyeing 2nd 'Djoko Slam'

AFP
Paris

World number one **Novak Djokovic** said that he "can make history again" as he looks to hold all four Grand Slam titles simultaneously for the second time, after easing into round two at the French Open yesterday.

Djokovic laid down an early marker at Roland Garros, powering past promising Polish youngster Hubert Hurkacz 6-4, 6-2, 6-2 in his opening match.

The Serbian is one of only three men, along with Don Budge and Rod Laver, to have won four straight Slam tournaments, after his first, and so far only, French Open title in 2016.

Now he can follow in Australian great Laver's footsteps by achieving the feat twice with victory in the final in Par-



is on June 9.

"I put myself in a situation where I can actually make history of tennis again and obviously I have very high ambitions for this tournament," said Djokovic.

"It's not a secret. But at the same time, it's not the first time that I'm facing these kind of circumstances. It's not the first Grand Slam in my career. I have played so many."

"I know it's two weeks potentially long, and I just need to be in my lockdown mentally, and just do things that have worked for me in the past."

Twelve months ago, Djokovic dropped out of the world's top 20 after a shock quarter-final loss to Marco Cecchinato at Roland Garros and even pondered skipping Wimbledon, but he has instead reclaimed his place at the top of the game. He won his second Wimbledon last July and followed it up with back-to-back

triumphs at the 2018 US Open and the Australian Open earlier this year.

"It's quite (a) different situation for me now than it was 12 months ago, obviously. Very different," the 32-year-old added. A single break in the opening game of the match proved enough for Djokovic to take the first set, and the Serb raced through the second in under half an hour.

The 22-year-old Hurkacz, who has claimed three wins over top-10 players this season, had no answer as Djokovic sealed a second-round spot after another dominant set on his first match point.

"I'm focused, I'm determined, and sharp from the blocks. That's what happened," he said.

"Even though I never played him (before), never faced him in (an) official match, I still felt he can be a great threat if I allow him to play his tennis!"

SPOTLIGHT

Roy completes England warm-up rout of Afghanistan

Hosts fast bowler Wood cleared for World Cup opener against South Africa

AFP
London

Jason Roy sealed an England thrashing of Afghanistan as the tournament hosts cruised to victory in their final match before the World Cup. Roy made 89 not out on his Surrey home ground yesterday as England hammered outsiders Afghanistan by nine wickets with nearly 200 balls to spare.

England, two days after losing their previous practice match to world champions Australia, returned to winning ways in convincing fashion ahead of their tournament opener against South Africa at the Oval on Thursday.

A target of 161 was never likely to test England, with Roy proving as much in a 46-ball innings that included 11 fours and four sixes. Before play started, England were boosted by the news that fast bowler Mark Wood had been passed fit to face South Africa after a foot injury and that one-day captain Eoin Morgan was back in the team following a fractured finger.

Durham quick Wood left the field early while running in to bowl during Saturday's warm-up defeat by Australia in Southampton after suffering a foot injury. Wood's injury-plagued career has been blighted by a history of repeated ankle problems but hospital scans saw the 29-year-old given the all clear for Thursday's opening match of the World Cup, against South Africa at the Oval.

Wood was scheduled to bowl during the warm-up immediately before yesterday's practice match against Afghanistan but did not play any part in the fixture itself. Wood has been one of England's quickest bowlers of recent years. But fears over his ability to stay fit for prolonged periods remain and he has bowled a mere 13.1 overs since the start of the season in a bid to reduce his workload prior to the World Cup.

Meanwhile, Morgan did not field, however, and was not required to bat with the only wicket Afghanistan took coming when Jonny Bairstow was stumped by Rahmat Shah off Mohamed Nabi for 39. Roy ended the match in the 18th over of England's reply with a six over midwicket.

Earlier, Jofra Archer and Joe Root took three wickets apiece as Afghanistan slumped to 160 all out. Fast bowler Archer struck twice with the new ball to dismiss Hazratullah and Rahmat before



England's Jason Roy plays cut shot during the ICC Cricket World Cup warm-up match against Afghanistan in London. (Reuters)

ending some late resistance from Nabi.

Opener Noor Ali scrapped his way to 30 before he played on to all-rounder Ben Stokes. Hashmatullah could not get going and that prompted Asghar Afghan to attack the occasional off-spin of Test captain Root.

But, having missed out on a first-ball full toss, Asghar tried to drive Root over the top but found Roy in the deep instead.

Afghanistan lost their next four wickets in a mere seven deliveries, Hashmatullah and Najibullah Zadran carelessly run out, Gulbadin Naib holding out to Moeen Ali and Rashid Khan steering Root to slip for a golden duck. Afghanistan were in danger of being dismissed for under 100 before Nabi, with 44, helped the last two wickets add 68 runs. Nabi's defiant hitting, which included three sixes, kept

England at bay before he was last man out when a thick edge off Archer carried to Bairstow on the boundary.

BRIEF SCORES

Afghanistan 160 all out in 38.4 overs (M Nabi 44, Root 3-22, Archer 3-32) lost to **England** 161 for 1 in 17.3 overs (Roy 89*, Nabi 1-34) beat by nine wickets

WARM-UP

Khawaja guides Australia to easy win over Sri Lanka

Reuters
Southampton

Opener Usman Khawaja shrugged off injury concerns to guide Australia to a five-wicket win over Sri Lanka in their final World Cup warm-up match yesterday. Australia's disciplined bowling performance restricted Sri Lanka to 239-8, but they looked to have suffered a blow when Khawaja limped off after being hit on the knee while fielding.

He later emerged to open the batting alongside captain Aaron Finch and continued his push for a spot in the Australian top order with a 105-ball 89. Shaun Marsh (34), Glenn Maxwell (36) and Marcus Stoinis (32) failed to build on solid starts but wicket-keeper-batsman Alex Carey and Pat Cummins ensured Australia chased down the total with 31 balls to spare.

Finch, who deployed eight bowlers on a chilly day in Southampton, was pleased with preparations ahead of their World Cup opener against Afghanistan on Saturday. "Feels like we are ready to go," Finch said. "Practice games are great to keep ticking the boxes and ensure we are doing our basics well."

"Guys are putting their hands up, and it will be a brutal selection call come our first game. We have specific plans against Afghanistan, they have some world class players."

Sri Lanka were off to a steady start after opting to bat first but wickets at regular intervals from Australian spinners in the middle overs meant they failed to post a big score. Opener Lahiru Thirimanne carved out a composed half-century but his dismissal by off-spinner Nathan Lyon sparked a middle-order collapse as Sri Lanka slipped from 110-2 to 161-6.

All-rounder Dhananjaya de Silva (43) shared a 64-run seventh-wicket stand with Thisara Perera (27) to ensure Sri Lanka breached the 200-run mark, before Mitchell Starc rattled his stumps in the 47th over.

Fast bowler Pat Cummins was Australia's most economical bowler, collecting 1-23 from eight overs, while leg-spinner Adam Zampa collected 2-39 from nine overs.

BRIEF SCORES

Sri Lanka 239 for 8 (Thirimanne 56, Zampa 2-39) lost to **Australia** 241 for 5 (Khawaja 89, Vandersay 2-51) by five wickets



Australia's Usman Khawaja plays a pull shot during the World Cup warm-up match against Sri Lanka at the Rose Bowl in Southampton, southern England, yesterday. (AFP)

FOCUS

Kiwis to test death bowling against Windies

Reuters
London

A power-hitting West Indian side will provide the perfect opportunity to test bowling tactics in the final 'death' overs ahead of the cricket World Cup, New Zealand bowling coach Shane Jurgensen has said.

While New Zealand's bowlers produced a superb performance

at the top of the innings in Saturday's six-wicket win over India, Jurgensen said the warm-up match against Jason Holder's side today should give them the chance to work on finishing off an innings as well.

"They'll put us under pressure and I think that will be key for us, especially for the bowlers," Jurgensen said. "One key area for all teams in this tournament is how you bowl at the death and limiting those bound-

aries in the last 10 overs. Taking wickets at the top will be a key component but at the back end of the innings you want to not leak too many boundaries and keep scores to a modest total."

Jurgensen added that he was pleased with the way Trent Boult, who took three early wickets, bowled against India, with his performance also showing how vital it was to exploit what swing is available during the tournament.

The Oval pitch supported New Zealand's bowlers against India but Jurgensen did not expect the ball to swing or seam as much in the tournament, predicting that opening bowlers might only get assistance for their first two overs.

"It was a good start against India but we can't get too excited," Jurgensen said. "We need to keep trucking on and working our way through the tournament. It's a long campaign."

World Cup organisers happy with security

London: Britain may be dealing with a national threat level of "severe" but officials are confident they have the security measures in place for a Cricket World Cup in England and Wales rated a "moderate" security risk.

Recent terror attacks in cricket playing nations have heightened safety concerns regarding the World Cup, which features 48 one-day international matches in 46 days starting with tournament hosts England against South Africa on Thursday. In March, 51 worshippers

were shot dead in mosque attacks in the New Zealand city of Christchurch while more than 250 people died in Sri Lanka as a result of suicide bombings on Easter Sunday. "When those incidents happened so close to the tournament, quite understandably that did cause some nervousness," Jill McCracken, the World Cup safety and security director, told reporters at the Oval.

Public events in Britain have not been immune from terror incidents in recent years, with 23

people killed in a suicide bomb attack after a concert by the American singer Ariana Grande in Manchester two years ago.

McCracken, explaining the security position regarding the World Cup, added: "The UK national threat level sits at 'severe', which means an attack is likely. But we also work with security services to assess the impact of the tournament itself and they have come to us with a bespoke threat for the event which is 'moderate' - the second lowest on the scale of risk."

BOTTOMLINE



Zaman: Pakistan's World Cup weapon

AFP
Karachi

Fakhar Zaman was still establishing himself in the Pakistan team when Jasprit Bumrah's no-ball in the Champions Trophy final triggered his unlikely rise from navy sailor to World Cup talisman. India appeared to have made the perfect start in the 2017 Champions Trophy showpiece when Zaman edged to wicket-keeper M S Dhoni off Bumrah.

However, the Indian fast bowler had overstepped the crease and Zaman, who had scored just three at the time, was given a reprieve that he made the most of, reaching his first one-day international century.

Fakhar changed the game with a crisp 114 to help Pakistan beat

their bitter rivals by a 180-run margin at the Oval to lift the trophy.

Since then Fakhar has been the lynchpin of Pakistan's batting and will be expected to anchor the line-up when the World Cup gets under way in England on May 30. "That no-ball made me. I had a dream before the final that I will be dismissed off a no-ball and it proved to be true," Fakhar said. "Initially I was very sad as I had promised my parents to do well in that match."

Fakhar's role in that famous victory against India came in just his fourth ODI and made him a household name in Pakistan. But he said the recognition has not distracted him as he focuses on inspiring Pakistan's bid for a second World Cup win and first since 1992.

"I was very lucky and ever

since that century I have become famous," he said. "But with that fame comes responsibility and I have become more mature and now I realise the importance of playing my part. That will be my top priority in the World Cup."

Luck has been on the unassuming left-hander's side since he defied his father's advice not to play cricket in his native Mardan. Fakhar joined the Pakistan Navy but cricket remained his dream. He kept his hand in by playing for the navy team and crucially benefited from a stroke of good fortune to fulfil his wish of playing for the national side.

Pakistan opener Sharjeel Khan was banned in a spot-fixing case during the second edition of the Pakistan Super League in 2017, just three months before the Champions Trophy. Fakhar's aggressive batting had impressed

head coach Mickey Arthur and chief selector Inzamam-ul-Haq.

They instantly selected Fakhar as an attacking option and he has paid them back by averaging a stunning 51.31 in his 36 ODIs. "I saw a game changer in Fakhar," recalled Inzamam. "We had to find someone to replace Sharjeel and after watching Fakhar we thought 'here is our man'. He lived up to that promise and we see him as an anchor in the World Cup."

The 29-year-old, called "soldier" by his teammates for his navy connection, smashed Pakistan's first double century in a one-day match in Zimbabwe last year and knows what is required of him in his country's World Cup campaign.

"My job is to score runs and I am doing that so I know that hard work will pay off," he said.

GOLF

Na claims third US PGA Tour title at Colonial

‘Every year I come here I know I had a chance to win and I knew before my career was over I was going to definitely win here’

AFP
Los Angeles

Kevin Na fired a final-round 66 at Colonial Country Club on Sunday to win the US PGA Tour's Charles Schwab Challenge by four strokes over fellow American Tony Finau.

Na continued his mastery of the classic course in Fort Worth, Texas, starting the day with a two-shot advantage that was never really challenged.

Na's six birdies included a 33-footer at the fourth and a 20-footer at the eighth.

He rolled in a 12-footer at the 72nd hole to cap his four-under par round with a birdie for a 13-under total of 267.

"It feels great," said Na, who celebrated with his toddler daughter, Sophia, in his arms. Na, 35, boasts an impressive record at Colonial, where he thrust himself into contention with a second-round 62. That was his third score of 62 or better on the course, where he matched the record of 61 on the way to a fourth-place finish last year.

He said he eyed the club's "wall of champions" on the first tee Sunday, "and in my head I engraved my name on it."

"Every year I come here I know I had a chance to win and I knew before my career was over I was going to definitely win here," added Na, who believes the compact course is one of "seven or eight" that offer him a chance to win on the US tour without a big-hitting game.

It was the second win in less than a year for the 35-year-old Na, a Las Vegas resident who was born in South Korea but came to America when he was just 8 years old. He last won at the 2018 Greenbrier event in July, and his best finish this season prior to Fort Worth was a tie for fifth at the WGC Match Play in March.

Na was also given a 1973 fully restored blue Dodge Challenger as one of his perks for winning the tournament which he quickly turned over to his caddie Kenny Harms. On Tuesday before the tournament started, Harms asked Na if he could have the car if they won the tournament. Na agreed. "I don't know how my caddie convinced me to give him the car, but he's a good salesman, I guess. He sold me into it. But I'm more than happy to give it to him. He deserves it. I got something cooler right here," said Na holding his trophy.

Finau, who was among a group of five players to start the round two shots behind Na, moved within one shot of the leader with his birdie at the second.

He was two adrift on the back nine but the gap widened when Na birdied 14 and Finau bogeyed 16. Finau finished with four birdies and two-bogeys in a two-under 68 for 271. It was a further stroke back to American Andrew Putnam (66) and Taiwan's Pan Cheng-tsung (69).

LEADING SCORES

267-Kevin Na 70-62-69-66
271-Tony Finau 64-68-71-68
272-Andrew Putnam 69-70-67-66, Pan Cheng-tsung (TPE) 68-67-68-69
273-Jonas Blixt (SWE) 67-64-74-68



Kevin Na of the United States poses with the trophy after winning the Charles Schwab Challenge at Colonial Country Club in Fort Worth, Texas. (Getty Images/AFP)

274-Rory Sabbatini (SVK) 68-66-73-67,
Ryan Palmer 68-69-68-69
275-Russell Knox (SCO) 71-68-71-65,
Tyrrell Hatton (ENG) 71-66-69-69, Nick
Watney 67-68-70-70, Jordan Spieth
65-70-68-72, Mackenzie Hughes (CAN)

68-70-65-72
276-Peter Uihlein 67-73-67-69, Brian Gay
69-71-67-69, Charley Hoffman 70-71-63-72,
Jim Furyk 69-66-68-73
277-Josh Teater 68-70-71-68, Matt Every
70-69-69-69

278-Jimmy Walker 67-74-70-67, Adam
Long 70-69-71-68, Billy Horschel 72-69-
69-68, Brandt Snedeker 74-67-68-69,
Emiliano Grillo (ARG) 69-70-68-71, Kevin
Tway 68-70-69-71, Scott Piercy 70-68-68-
72, Austin Cook 72-67-65-74.

SPOTLIGHT

Law goes crackers for first LPGA win

Reuters
Washington

On course for her maiden LPGA Tour victory on Sunday, Bronte Law's final round at the Pure Silk Championship started to go pear-shaped at the turn as searing heat sapped her strength and her swing started to fail her.

Thankfully, crackers saved the day. "I honestly don't think that I ate enough on the front nine," said Law after sealing a two-stroke win in Williamsburg, Virginia.

"I would've kicked myself had that been the issue, but I could feel myself getting a little tired. When I got tired I swung a little under the plane and start losing those shots out right."

The 24-year-old had picked up four shots in her first eight holes on Sunday to grab the outright lead but the first signs of trouble came at the ninth where she pushed her drive right and ran up a bogey.

The next two holes saw her leak drives to the right again, and while she managed to save par the Englishwoman was in danger of letting the round get away from her.

"On hole 11 I think it was I told my caddie, I need some food. I was kind of getting so caught up in the moment that I really didn't eat enough."

"I think I had a crackers or something. I don't really like to eat when it's that hot. I managed to force some food down my throat and I was fine after that."

Law had been on the brink of her first LPGA Tour title three weeks ago in San Francisco but lost out in a playoff at the Medinah Championship to Kim Sei-young.

Bouncing back from that disappointment so quickly, and holding it together on Sunday when the heat was on, proved she had what it takes to compete on the elite women's circuit, Law added.

"So that's something that I'm going to carry forward for the coming weeks. Obviously have a big one next week. This was kind of the perfect way to prepare, I guess."

The "big one" is the biggest of all - the US Women's Open. She failed to make the cut in 2017 and did not play last year but hopes to be vying for the title at next week's tournament in South Carolina.

"I don't think you have to change anything just because the title of the event changes," she said. "I'll go out there and I'll prepare as I did this week."

"It's golf, so hopefully I can carry on this momentum into next week and play some more solid golf and kind of be in contention again. That's what I live for. The feeling when you have a shot at winning is exactly why I play the game."

LEADING FINAL-ROUND SCORES

267 - Bronte Law (ENG) 65-68-67-67
269 - Madelene Sagstrom (SWE) 68-66-69-66, Brooke M. Henderson (CAN) 66-71-64-68, Nasa Hataoka (JPN) 68-67-65-69-69
270 - Hsu Wei-ling (TPE) 72-67-65-66
271 - Azahara Munoz (ESP) 71-69-67-64, Carlota Ciganda (ESP) 69-65-68-69
272 - Jennifer Song 65-68-68-71
273 - Cristie Kerr 70-70-70-63, Katherine Perry 66-73-66-68
274 - Caroline Masson (GER) 69-69-67-69, Ashleigh Buhai (RSA) 68-67-70-69
275 - Feng Shanshan (CHN) 75-67-69-64, Park Hee-young (KOR) 68-73-68-66, Minjee Lee (AUS) 68-73-67-67, Amy Olson 70-68-70-67, Jessica Korda 69-68-71-67, Gaby Lopez (MEX) 68-72-67-68, Hur Mi-jung (KOR) 68-71-68-68, Charley Hull (ENG) 68-69-69-69
276 - Gemma Dryburgh (SCO) 66-75-70-65, Hannah Green (AUS) 70-69-70-67, Ko Jin-young (KOR) 71-68-69-68, Austin Ernst 68-70-68, Haru Nomura (JPN) 69-67-71-69



Bronte Law of England holds the championship trophy after winning the Pure Silk Championship presented by Visit Williamsburg on the River Course in Williamsburg, Virginia. (Getty Images/AFP)

FOCUS

Sugar Ray says boxing not dead, rival Duran not so sure

Reuters
Los Angeles

American boxing great Sugar Ray Leonard says that while the sport may not be the national obsession it was during his prime, it is still healthy, an assertion disputed by longtime rival-turned-friend Roberto Duran.

In a joint interview to promote a new film on the Panamanian's career, entitled "I Am Duran", the former enemies traded barbs - and laughs - about the state of the sport as well as the nature of their historic battles which captivated the sporting world in the 1980s.

"Boxing is not dead like some say it is," said Leonard, who lost his WBC Welterweight title to Duran in the "Brawl in Montreal" in 1980 before winning it back in an infamous rematch later that same year.

"But the sport itself has to fix itself. Don't just say you're the best - show the people or the fans that you are the best by

fighting the best and let them be the judge," he told Reuters.

Duran, 67, made it clear he did not think much of the current crop of fighters.

"No respect," he said through an interpreter when asked about the personalities who populate the ring today, such as heavyweight world champion Anthony Joshua and WBC heavyweight titleholder Deontay Wilder.

"We were born in the time period of the real fighters," he said.

"If you compare today's boxers to the boxers like us from back in those days, these guys would have never won."

Duran, who fought his way out of poverty to become an icon in his native Panama, said he did, however, like Mexican Saul "Canelo" Alvarez, who currently holds three of the four middle-weight titles.

"I admire the Mexican kid who obviously is doing very well. I always think that Americans are the ones making the big bucks here in this sport," he said.

"However, we have Canelo now. He's not only a Mexican but he's also a Latino who's do-

ing really well and making a lot of money."

Leonard said Duran, whose relentless, aggressive fighting style and punishing punches earned him an astounding 103-16 career record, is among the best he ever faced.

"People ask me that all the time, who hit you the hardest?" Leonard said.

"And a lot of times I say Roberto Duran because Duran hit me so hard - and so many times in so many illegal places - that it felt like a few people in the ring," he said, flashing his trademark smile.

"He was so quick and so elusive. Just an amazing, amazing champion."

Leonard, who won 36 and drew one of his 40 fights, said he lost the first meeting with Duran, a 15-round unanimous decision, in part because he chose to stand toe to toe with Duran instead of relying on his superior speed.

Leonard has said he wanted to hurt Duran after he made disparaging remarks about Leonard's wife in the lead up to

the fight, the only fight Leonard said he ever went into angry. The two would face off in a rematch later that year in a fight dubbed "No Mas" after Duran shocked the world by quitting midway through the eighth round.

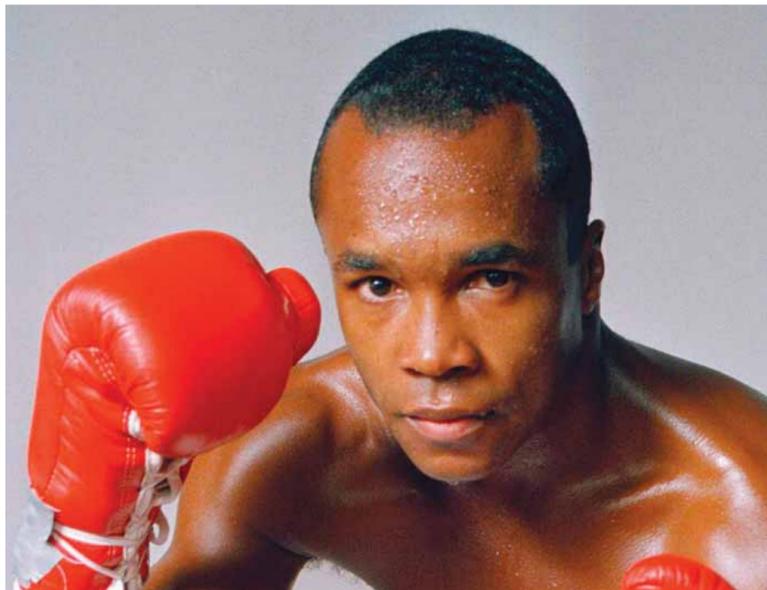
Leonard successfully changed his tactics in the rematch, moving constantly and taunting Duran in ways that unnerved the champion.

Duran said he was forced to stop fighting due to overwhelming muscle pain that he said was connected to the rapid weight loss he went through to make the weight for the rematch.

Duran, who is known for his acerbic wit and love of a good time, had packed on the pounds while celebrating his win over Leonard. But time heals all wounds and Leonard says he is happy to call him a friend, even if it took some getting used to.

"It seems so surreal when I see him because the first thing I want to do is do this," said Leonard, putting up his fists.

"But in all sincerity, I love this guy. This guy made me the fighter I am today."



American boxing great Sugar Ray Leonard.

MLB

Woodruff dominates Phillies as Brewers avoid sweep

Los Angeles Dodgers beat Pittsburgh Pirates 11-7 to complete three-game series sweep



Milwaukee Brewers pitcher Brandon Woodruff throws the ball in the first inning against the Philadelphia Phillies at Miller Park. **PICTURE:** USA TODAY Sports

AFP
Los Angeles

Brandon Woodruff retired the first 15 hitters, allowed one hit in eight dominant innings and the Milwaukee Brewers averted a three-game sweep to the visiting Philadelphia Phillies with a 9-1 victory on Sunday afternoon.

Woodruff (7-1) improved to 6-0 in his last eight starts and picked up his league-leading seventh win. He lost his perfect game bid and shutout when Andrew Knapp opened the sixth with a homer.

After allowing Knapp's first homer, Woodruff retired the next nine hitters and ended his outing by fanning Knapp on a 98-mph fastball. Woodruff struck out a career-high 10 hitters and finished every inning with a strikeout. He fanned Bryce Harper and Odubel Herrera three times apiece to highlight a 97-pitch outing. The Brewers produced their eighth one-hitter in team history and first at Miller Park. It was their first one-hitter since CC Sabathia allowed only an infield single at Pittsburgh on Aug 31, 2008.

It also was the Brewers' first one-hitter in Milwaukee since Danny Darwin against the Minnesota Twins on Aug 19, 1985.

Christian Yelich hit his major league-leading 21st homer, Ben Gamel recorded his first career multi-homer game as Milwaukee

RESULTS

| | | |
|-----------|------|-----------|
| Twins | 7-0 | White Sox |
| A's | 7-1 | Mariners |
| Royals | 8-7 | Yankees |
| Rockies | 8-7 | Orioles |
| Brewers | 9-1 | Phillies |
| Braves | 4-3 | Cardinals |
| Dodgers | 11-7 | Pirates |
| Red Sox | 4-1 | Astros |
| Angels | 7-6 | Rangers |
| Rays | 6-3 | Indians |
| Reds | 10-2 | Cubs |
| Blue Jays | 10-1 | Padres |
| Nationals | 9-6 | Marlins |
| Mets | 4-3 | Tigers |
| D'backs | 6-2 | Giants |

kee rebounded nicely from Saturday's 7-2 loss. Yasmani Grandal and Hernan Perez also homered as Milwaukee tied a season-high with five homers and collected 12 hits.

Woodruff, who is hitting .370 (10-for-27), drove in a pair of runs. He had an RBI double in the fourth and then contributed a run-scoring single to cap a four-run fifth that helped Milwaukee race out to a 7-0 lead.

Philadelphia starter Zach Eflin (5-5) turned

in his shortest outing of the season, allowing three runs on six hits in 3 2/3 innings. He exited after allowing Woodruff's double.

The Phillies lost for the third time in their last 10 games as shortstop Jean Segura saw the majors' longest active hitting streak ended at 16 games. Milwaukee jumped ahead when Gamel capped a seven-pitch at-bat by homering in the third. The Brewers added two in the fourth when Grandal homered on the second pitch of the inning and Woodruff doubled. Yelich hit his latest homer off Vince Velasquez in the fifth, and Grandal followed with an RBI groundout before Perez homered and Woodruff singled.

Milwaukee third baseman Mike Moustakas was ejected in the seventh inning by third base umpire Mike Estabrook. Estabrook was the plate umpire Saturday and tossed Ryan Braun and manager Craig Counsell.

Meanwhile Corey Seager and Joc Pederson homered and Matt Beaty drove in four runs Sunday for the visiting Los Angeles Dodgers, who outslugged the Pittsburgh Pirates 11-7 on Sunday to complete a three-game series sweep. Justin Turner was 5-for-5 with a walk and three runs scored during his first career five-hit game for the Dodgers, who over the past three seasons are 17-2 against Pittsburgh and have won 10 straight.

Los Angeles finished its road trip with a 6-2 mark. Bryan Reynolds and Adam Frazier homered for Pittsburgh, which concluded

a 1-5 homestand. Los Angeles starter Kenta Maeda (6-2) and Pittsburgh starter Chris Archer (1-5) each pitched five innings. Maeda allowed three runs and five hits, with four strikeouts and no walks. Archer gave up four runs and six hits, with three strikeouts and six walks. Seager led off the second with a first-pitch homer, his fifth, to center for a 1-0 Dodgers lead. It was Los Angeles' 80th homer of the season. Pittsburgh took a 2-1 lead in the bottom of the second on Reynolds' fifth homer, a two-run shot to right.

Los Angeles regained the lead in the fifth, 4-2, on Beaty's two-run single and an RBI fielder's choice by Seager.

Frazier hit his third homer, a shot to centre, to close it to 4-3 with two outs in the fifth.

Against relievers Montana DuRapau and Dovydas Neverauskas, the Dodgers sent 11 batters to the plate and racked up six runs in the sixth. Pederson led off with his 15th homer and later singled in the sixth run of the frame for a 10-3 advantage.

Los Angeles catcher Austin Barnes was hit by a pitch in that sequence. He stayed in to run the bases but left after that because of groin soreness. Colin Moran, Elias Diaz and Melky Cabrera each had an RBI base hit in the bottom of the sixth as the Pirates pulled to within 10-6. Beaty's RBI single in the seventh made it 11-6, and Gregory Polanco's RBI double in the ninth made it a four-run margin and closed out the scoring.

NFL

Patriots tight end Watson says he faces 4-game ban for PEDs

Reuters
New York

New England Patriots tight end Ben Watson was suspended four games for violating the league's performance-enhancing drugs policy, a punishment he knew was coming when he came out of retirement this off-season.

In a statement posted on social media on Sunday, Watson said his doctors prescribed him Bio Identical Testosterone Cypionate - a substance he knew to be banned in the NFL - in March after he'd made what he thought was a permanent decision to retire. Nine days after first taking it, Watson was tested by the league. That was about a month before he would change his mind and decide to keep playing.

"I complied (with the test) out of habit, never thinking in that moment I'd want to come back," he said in the statement. "...Considering myself previously retired, I had forgotten all about my test in March until I got a letter on May 3 saying my results were positive. I was devastated and for obvious reasons didn't want to proceed."

Watson said he told interested teams about the test, and the Patriots agreed to sign him earlier this month despite the pending suspension.

"This is not how I would want to enter a new locker room and attempt to earn my role on a new team," the statement added. "However, I respect the regulations that have been collectively bargained to promote fairness on the field of play and accept the discipline associated with my infraction."

Watson, 38, hasn't missed a game since 2013. He will sit out contests against Pittsburgh, at Miami, against the New York Jets and at Buffalo before being eligible to play in Week 5 at Washington on Oct. 6.

When he does play, it will be his first appearance for the Patriots since 2009, after playing six seasons with the team that drafted him 32nd overall in 2004. Watson also spent three years in Cleveland and four of the last five in New Orleans.

Last season, he caught 35 passes for 400 yards and two touchdowns in 16 games (four starts) with the Saints.

Watson has 530 receptions for 5,885 yards and 44 touchdowns in 195 career games (135 starts).

Green Bay Packers great Bart Starr dies

Legendary Green Bay quarterback Bart Starr, who anchored the Packers dynasty of the 1960s and was Most Valuable Player of the first two Super Bowls, died on Sunday at the age of 85, the NFL team said.

Starr won an unprecedented five NFL championships as Green Bay's starting quarterback, leading the Packers to the title in 1961, 1962, 1965, 1966 and 1967.

"We are saddened to note the passing of our husband, father, grandfather, and friend, Bart Starr," the Hall of Famer's family said in a statement.

"He battled with courage and determination to transcend the serious stroke he suffered in September 2014, but his most recent illness was too much to overcome.

"While he may always be best known for his success as the Packers quarterback for 16 years, his true legacy will always be the respectful manner in which he treated every person he met, his humble demeanor, and his generous spirit."

The five titles won in seven years by Packers teams led by Starr and coach Vince Lombardi remain the most successful such span in NFL history.

Among the accomplishments of those years, Starr is best remembered for the game-winning quarterback sneak that delivered victory in the December 31, 1967 game against the Dallas Cowboys dubbed the "Ice Bowl".

That triumph at frigid Lambeau Field epitomized the grit of the Lombardi-era Packers. "That's the sign of a champion," Cowboys tackle Ralph Neely told the Green Bay Press-Gazette after the contest.

"They needed a score, and Starr got it for them."

NBA

After loss, Antetokounmpo walks off podium into offseason

DPA
Los Angeles

If Giannis Antetokounmpo was as effective at closing out games as interviews, the Milwaukee Bucks might be headed to the NBA Finals.

The "Greek Freak" walked off the podium on Saturday night after the Bucks blew a big lead and lost Game 6 of the Eastern Conference finals, 100-94, to the host Toronto Raptors, who reached the Finals for the first time in franchise history.

To be fair, Antetokounmpo had answered six questions following the most difficult loss of his career. The last straw was a question that he had already been asked twice with different phrasing.

"Man, obviously when you're up 2-0, that doesn't mean nothing," Antetokounmpo said earlier in the interview.

"You've got to learn how to come out and close out games, especially after Game 3."

The Bucks won a league-best 60 games this season led by Antetokounmpo, the likely Most Valuable Player. Milwaukee won 10 of its first 11 playoff contests before losing four

in a row to Toronto, doubling its longest slide of the season. The Bucks lost Game 3 in double overtime.

They dropped Game 5 at home after opening a 14-point lead and Game 6 after holding a 76-61 advantage late in the third quarter. "We knew that they were going to make a run," Antetokounmpo said.

"But obviously we weren't able to rebound the ball and get out in transition and get the easy points. That's why we lost the lead."

Toronto scored the last 10 points of the third period, and Antetokounmpo spent the first 90 seconds of the fourth quarter on the bench as the rest of Milwaukee's lead melted away. The Bucks were plus-3 during Antetokounmpo's 39 minutes but minus-9 when he rested. "I don't think Giannis playing 44 minutes is the solution," Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer said.

"Obviously I want to be out there. I want to play," Antetokounmpo said. "I love playing. But I trust my coach."

Down the stretch, Antetokounmpo was ineffective, scoring just three points on 1-of-5 shooting with no assists while facing constant double-teams. Overall, he had 21 points on 7-of-18 shooting with 11 rebounds and

four assists. "What I did was trust my teammates," he said.

"That's what I've been doing the whole year. If we lose by doing that, by trusting one another, by moving the ball, by doing what we've been doing all year, by trusting our habits, it's okay."

While Antetokounmpo trusted his teammates, Raptors superstar Kawhi Leonard took the game into his own hands. The former Finals MVP with San Antonio scored 15 of his 27 points after the Bucks opened their 15-point lead and willed his team to victory.

"He knows what he's going to do. He has confidence in himself," Antetokounmpo noted. "And he has the experience. He's been here before. He's been to the Finals multiple times."

Before walking off the podium and into the offseason, Antetokounmpo vowed that this experience will make him and the Bucks better. "I think it's just the start of a long journey," he said.

"We're going to get better. We're going to come back next year and believe in who we are, believe in what we've built this year, and hopefully we can be in the same situation and be the ones moving forward."



Giannis Antetokounmpo of the Milwaukee Bucks defends Marc Gasol of the Toronto Raptors during the second-half in game six of the NBA Eastern Conference Finals in Toronto. (Getty Images/AFP)

F1

'Average' Hamilton feels he can do better

I guess that's kind of similar to other seasons but without doubt it's going to improve..'

Reuters
Monaco

Lewis Hamilton has won four grands prix and finished second in the other two and yet the Formula One leader feels his performance so far this season has been all a bit average.

Rivals may want to take that with a pinch of salt, or go and lie down somewhere secluded, because on paper the Briton has never had it so good.

Hamilton has also started on pole position twice, unleashed a blistering lap around the streets of Monaco at the weekend, and set one fastest lap.

He has taken a record from Michael Schumacher with his 59th pole for a single team, one more than the German great managed at Ferrari, and with 77 wins is closing in fast on Schumacher's record 91. The five times world champion's own assessment, with 15 races remaining, is that he can and will do better.

"I definitely feel it's been quite an average performance from myself, maybe above average but generally quite average for the first six races," he told reporters on Sunday.

"I feel like I've got the best I could get. I've arrived prepared - the best prepared I could be - but in terms of extracting the true performance from the car, I feel like I've struggled a little bit in these six races.

"I guess that's kind of similar to other seasons but without doubt it's going to improve.."

Hamilton has a habit of saving the best to last, calibrating things early on and then hitting the equivalent of a turbo button after the August break.

The 34-year-old has won four of the last five world championships with Mercedes, after a first title with McLaren in 2008, but this year he is looking as competitive as he has ever been.

ROSBERG RIVALRY

In 2014, when German team mate Nico Rosberg was Hamilton's main rival and Mercedes also won the first six races, the Briton retired from the Australian season-opener before winning four in a row.

The following year he was triumphant in only three of the first six, while in 2016 eventual champion Rosberg won the opening four.

Hamilton managed two wins in the first six races in 2017, when Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel was more of a threat, and last year was a similar story with a lucky victory in Azerbaijan and another in Spain at the same stage.

"I do anticipate things will get better," he said, while also recog-



Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton (left) receives his trophy by Prince Albert II of Monaco on the podium after the Monaco Formula 1 Grand Prix at the Monaco street circuit in Monaco. (AFP)

Wolff expects Bottas to be fired up by Monaco setback

Mercedes expect an angry **Valtteri Bottas** to come back strongly after losing ground to team mate Lewis Hamilton in the Formula One championship through no fault of his own in Monaco on Sunday. The Finn is now 17 points behind the five-times world champion after finishing third in Monaco following a pitlane collision with Red Bull's Max Verstappen early in the race. Verstappen was handed a five-second penalty for the unsafe release, a sanction that dropped the Dutchman from second to fourth. Hamilton won, his fourth victory of the season, with Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel promoted to second after Verstappen's drop. "Valtteri lost a second place, three points, and Mercedes (lost) a one-two," said team principal Toto Wolff on Sunday evening. "From Valtteri's point of view, he will be gutted. He had the pace on the weekend, he could have been on pole in terms of raw speed and today P2 (second) was the minimum I think. And that P2 was taken away from him. "The Valtteri of 2019 is going to get out of it stronger," added the Austrian. Bottas has still finished on the podium in every race so far this season, with Mercedes taking five successive one-twins until Monaco, and has been a

different driver to the man who failed to win anything in 2018. He has two wins and three second places as well as Sunday's third, which was still his first Monaco Grand Prix podium appearance. "I think he has shown huge resilience and determination in these last races," commented Wolff. "The speed (in qualifying) was mind-boggling yesterday and I have no doubt about it that it's going to annoy the hell out of him and he's going to come back very, very strong in Montreal." Bottas said his race had been "a bit of a Sunday drive" after the impact with Verstappen left him with a puncture.



nising that the past had become something of a blur.

"I hope, at some stage, that I'm able to crack the issues that

I've had and get back to the form that I have within me.

"Whether that's the next race or 10 races from now, I can't re-

ally say but I am very, very focused on making sure I rectify any of those (issues)."

Sunday could have gone badly

wrong, with Hamilton on the wrong tyres after an early pit-stop when the safety car was deployed, but he put in a champion's drive to secure victory.

It helped that Monaco is a track where it is almost impossible to overtake, and that the chasing Max Verstappen was stuck in the wrong torque mode for much of the race, but Hamilton laid the groundwork by taking pole.

By the time he flies to Canada, after attending the funeral in Vienna of the team's non-executive chairman and triple champion Niki Lauda, Mercedes could have taken another step forward.

"Going into the next race, a lot of analysis will be made and particularly towards trying to understand the tyres better and deliver better in terms of our processes," he said. "And on my side, trying to work even better with my engineers to try and extract more from my car.

"I know the guys back at the factory are working on developments, so obviously at the next race I think we will probably have a new engine...so the car will continue to move forwards as we will."

RUGBY

Pocock expected to announce 2019 retirement - report

Reuters
Melbourne

Wallabies flanker David Pocock is expected to confirm that 2019 will be his last season in Australian Rugby when he fronts a media conference today, a report on the Rugby Australia website Rugby.com.au said yesterday.

The 31-year-old openside is struggling with a long-term calf injury and has played only for three matches for the ACT Brumbies in Super Rugby this season.

Rugby.com.au said Pocock was set to confirm 2019 would be his last season with the Canberra-based Brumbies, though he was expected to play in Japan's Top League after the World Cup in the east Asian nation.

Brumbies coach Dan McKellar conceded last week that Pocock may have already played his last Brumbies game as he prepares for one last tilt at winning a World Cup in Michael Cheika's Wallabies.

"The Brumbies medical staff and the Wallabies medical staff will have a chat over the next few days and we'll come to some sort of clarity there around where he heads over the next few weeks," McKellar said.

"It's all the things we've got to look at to see whether he plays Super Rugby or whether he now puts his attention towards the World Cup.

"Those are things we've got to discuss between the Brumbies and the Wallabies."

The 77-test Pocock is renowned as one of the world's best fetchers but has struggled with a string of serious injuries since returning from a sabbatical last season.

Meanwhile Karmichael Hunt's hopes of a return to the Wallabies squad ahead of the World Cup have been dealt

a blow with the New South Wales Waratahs utility back expected to miss the rest of the Super Rugby season with a knee injury.

Hunt went down with a suspected medial ligament injury in the first minute of a 23-15 loss to the Jaguares on Saturday.

While the team are still awaiting the results of a scan, Waratahs assistant coach Steve Tandy gave a gloomy prognosis when asked whether Hunt was out for the rest of the season.

"Yeah, I should imagine so unless something remarkable happens," Tandy told reporters at training in Sydney on Monday.

"It's just really disappointing for Karmichael and the team.

"You're obviously losing a player with a lot of experience and his physical presence, and what he brings to the training week is obviously a big miss."

Frozen out by Queensland Reds coach Brad Thorn last season, Hunt was thrown a lifeline by Waratahs coach Daryl Gibson and was seen as a chance to win back a spot in Michael Cheika's squad for the Rugby World Cup in Japan.

However, the 32-year-old seems unlikely to have any more chances to impress Cheika before he picks his squad for the Rugby Championship starting in July.

The Waratahs' loss to the Jaguares has all but killed off their playoffs chances in a dreary season after their run to last year's semi-finals.

Sitting third in the Australian conference behind the leading ACT Brumbies and the Melbourne Rebels with three rounds left in the regular season, the Waratahs had already lost the services of Wallabies fullback Israel Folau after he was sacked for a controversial social media post.

Uzbek weightlifter Nurudinov disqualified from London Olympics

Uzbekistan's Ruslan Nurudinov has been disqualified from the London Olympics weightlifting competition after being found guilty of doping, the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) said yesterday. Nurudinov finished fourth in the 105-kg category in London and went on to win gold at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics four years later. CAS said that its anti-doping division found that Nurudinov tested positive for the banned substance dehydrochloromethyltestosterone. It said he was disqualified from the event "with all resulting consequences, including forfeiture of any medals, points and/or prizes." CAS said the case would be referred to the International

Weightlifting Federation "for further follow-up." The International Olympic Committee stores and regularly re-tests samples from past Games with methods that did not exist at the time. It also carries out tests for substances that were previously unknown in order to protect clean athletes and the integrity of the competition. Nurudinov could not immediately be reached and the Uzbeki Weightlifting Federation told Reuters it had no immediate comment. CAS said that Mikalai Novikau of Belarus, who finished eighth in the 85kg category, tested positive for dehydrochloromethyltestosterone and stanozolol and had also been disqualified.

MOTORSPORT

Pagenaud wins Indianapolis 500 and a job

Reuters
Indianapolis

Roger Penske had heard the 'scuttlebutt' and surely Simon Pagenaud must have heard the whispers that his job was on the line in the run up to Sunday's Indianapolis 500.

The Frenchman put an emphatic end to the rumours, sending a clear message that he is not just a member of the powerhouse Team Penske but at the moment its top driver after winning "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing".

The victory, which gave Penske his 18th Indy 500 win, followed up a win at the Indianapolis Grand Prix two weeks ago, capping a perfect May by the 35-year-old Frenchman.

"That's pretty much my trait, that's my character I never give up until it's over," said Pagenaud, recalling how one year he found 350 sponsors to keep racing. "That's what saved me, saved my career at one point.

"That's what always helped me and I always believed.

"If you really believe it, believe it hard, and if you work hard enough, anything can happen."

Having worked so hard to earn a spot on IndyCar's top outfit, Pagenaud was not going to give it up without a fight.

The son of a grocer, the lessons of his youth in Montmorillon have served Pagenaud well as he climbed the motor racing ladder to the top North American open wheel series.

"It's been tough to get to the top level of racing," said Pagenaud. "Especially when you come from a non-racing family.

"I had nobody in racing. I had to learn it all on my own. But actually I think it's an advantage because I had no choice, it was either going to work or I was done."

Following the race Penske made it clear his team, which includes Australian Will Power and American Josef Newgarden, is not finished with Pagenaud and he will be back in one of his cars next season.

"What do you think? Absolutely," said Penske, when asked if Pagenaud would be back.

"He's on our team. He's one of our drivers."

The IndyCar Series moves next week to Detroit for a doubleheader of races with Pagenaud leading the driver standings. On top one week, a philosophical Pagenaud understands he might find himself on the bottom the next but believes results are not always a reflection of ability.

"Obviously in racing you need a little bit of luck on your side," said Pagenaud. "You need everything to go your way. It did today. I could do nothing wrong, quite frankly. And sometimes I can't do anything right.

"That doesn't mean I lost my talent, that doesn't mean my team is not doing a good job. It's just you have to accept that there's a little bit of mystery out there that you can't control. All you can do is the best you can."

Simon Pagenaud of Penske Chevrolet poses with the Borg-Warner Trophy after the Indianapolis 500 in Indianapolis, Indiana. (Getty Images/AFP)



SERIE A

Atalanta qualify for Champions League as Milan miss out

Genoa and Fiorentina stayed in Serie A after a nerve-wracked goalless draw

AFP
Rome

Atalanta won at Sassuolo on Sunday night to secure their first ever Champions League spot and Inter Milan joined them while ensuring Empoli were relegated after a frantic second half in the San Siro. AC Milan ended up fifth despite winning at SPAL. Genoa and Fiorentina stayed in Serie A after a nerve-wracked goalless draw.

The evening started with Inter, Atalanta, AC Milan and Roma battling for the two remaining Champions League spots and Empoli knowing that if they won they would survive. Because their ground is being redeveloped, Atalanta had to cede home advantage and play at Sassuolo where they quickly fell behind. Duvan Zapata levelled before half-time.

After Sassuolo lost their scorer Domenico Berardi, who received a red card for his part in the mass brawl that ended the first half, Atalanta comfortably sealed third as goals by Alejandro Gomez and Mario Pasalic completed a 3-1 win.

"It's been an extraordinary season," Atalanta president Antonio Percassi said. "My first hug was for (coach Gian Piero) Gasperini, for a lifetime. It's already a given that he'll still be here next season."

Milan took a two-goal lead at SPAL, with goals by Hakan Calhanoglu and Franck Kessie, but Francesco Vicari and Mohamed Fares replied. Meanwhile at the San Siro, after a goal-less first half, Inter brought on Keita Balde.

The striker broke the deadlock with a solo goal six minutes later, earning a yellow card for ripping off his shirt in celebration. The home team had a chance to increase their lead when Mauro Icardi tumbled over Empoli goalkeeper Bartłomiej Dragowski. After a delay for video review, Icardi missed the penalty. A few minutes later in Ferrara, Kessie rolled in a penalty to put AC Milan back in the lead against SPAL. They held on to win 3-2.

Back at the San Siro, Salih Ucan's low cross from the right reached Hamed Traore unmarked in front of goal and he levelled to lift Empoli out of the relegation places and push Inter out of the top



Roma's Italian midfielder Daniele De Rossi waves at the fans during his farewell after 18 years at his hometown club after Serie A match against Parma at the Olympic Stadium in Rome on Sunday night. (AFP)

four. Five minutes later, Radja Nainggolan changed that when he pounced on a rebound to put Inter ahead.

In a frantic finish, Empoli came close several times with Inter centre-back Stefan de Vrij deflecting one shot onto his own bar. In added time, with Dragowski in the Empoli attack, Inter rolled the ball into the empty net, but Balde had pulled Dragowski back in the build-up. The goal was disallowed and Balde earned a second yellow card. Yet the 2-1 win was enough to save Inter and doom Empoli.

The wins of the three teams above them meant Roma finished sixth despite beating visiting Parma 2-1. They also bid

farewell to captain and local hero Daniele De Rossi who came off to rapturous applause with nine minutes to play.

Earlier on Sunday, Massimiliano Allegri ended his Juventus career in disappointing fashion as the champions were undone by two late strikes at Sampdoria to finish the Serie A season with a five-match winless streak.

Despite a poor final few weeks they still finished 11 points ahead of second-placed Napoli, who ended their underwhelming campaign beaten 3-2 at Bologna on Saturday. "I feel good because I ended five incredible years by winning the title... tomorrow a new era begins," Allegri said

after the 2-0 defeat.

He leaves having also won four Italian Cups and re-established the Old Lady as a force in Europe, reaching two Champions League finals and signing Cristiano Ronaldo last summer. "I'll come back to work when I have the opportunity... I need to find a team with which I can enjoy myself and do a good job," he added.

Sampdoria's 36-year-old striker Fabio Quagliarella failed to add to his 26 goals but still finished as the Serie A top scorer, three ahead of Zapata. Torino finished their exciting campaign in seventh place, level on points with Roma, following a 3-1 win over Lazio.

FIFA U-20 WORLD CUP

Qatar lose to Ukraine in a tight contest

By Sports Reporter
Tychy, Poland

Qatar lost their second successive match at the FIFA Under-20 World Cup in Poland yesterday after going down to Ukraine 0-1 in Poland. Bruno Miguel's boys had to lose Nigeria in their Group D opening match.

Now they have to beat USA on Thursday in their final group to keep their last 16 chances alive. The tournament's 24-team format allows the four best third-placed countries from the groups to also progress and Qatar will be hoping that they can sneak through.

Defender Denys Popov scored his second consecutive winning goal as Ukraine won a tight contest yesterday, which confirmed their place in the knockout phase.

After an evenly-contested first half, Popov headed home in the 59th minute on a second-chance opportunity from an initial corner for the Ukrainians. Serhii Bulletsya provided the delivery for his second assist of the competition.

Things went from bad to worse for Qatar as captain Nasir Peer was shown a straight red card for a late tackle on Maksym Chekh. Ukraine have now advanced to the Round of 16 in all four of their

appearances in competition history (2001, 2005, 2015 and 2019). However, they have yet to reach the quarter-finals.

Meanwhile, late goals in each half helped Uruguay outlast Honduras 2-0 at Lublin Stadium as La Celeste secure their place in the knockout stage. The road to the knockout rounds became much clearer on Sunday for Groups A and B. With two of three group stage matches played for eight teams, two sides can already count themselves among the final 16.

Italy clinched a place in the Round of 16 at Poland 2019, having recorded back-to-back wins over Mexico and Ecuador. Their latest conquest in Bydgoszcz was workmanlike, with captain Andrea Pinamonti putting Gli Azzurri ahead early and their heady defence doing the rest.

Senegal made it two victories in two games by converting a pair of penalties against Colombia, also solidifying a spot in the last 16. The Lions of Teranga boast a three-point cushion on top of Group A with Poland as their final group stage opponent.

On Sunday Japan put together perhaps an even more impressive performance, shutting out the touted Mexico attack to the tune of 3-0 in Gdynia for their first win of the competition.



Valerii Bondar of Ukraine (right) challenges for the ball with Abdurashed Umaru of Qatar during the FIFA U-20 World Cup group D match in Tychy, Poland. (FIFA)

SPOTLIGHT

Kane would be ready 'tomorrow' to play Champions League final

By David Hytner
The Guardian

Harry Kane has made it plain he will be fit for the Champions League final against Liverpool on Saturday, going so far as to say if the game were tomorrow, he would be available. The Tottenham striker's fitness has been a major talking point since the ankle ligament injury he suffered in the first leg of the quarter-final against Manchester City on 9 April. It was the fifth time in three seasons Kane had damaged ankle ligaments. Previously, the England captain has been out for between three and seven weeks with the problems.

Kane returned to full training last Friday and, assuming all goes well, he hopes to be in Mauricio Pochettino's starting XI for Madrid. The manager has so far given nothing away as to whether he intends to start with Kane. The player's upbeat fitness bulletin also represents good news for England, who contest the inaugural Nations League finals, which begin on 6 June.

Kane said: "If the final was tomorrow, I would be fit to play. I feel good. I'm back [training] with the team and there have been no problems so far. I've been in full training, doing everything. I'm at a place now where I'm ready to go for any game. The manager will assess it and decide. But, so far, I feel good and ready."

"Having the three-week gap after the end of the [Premier League] season definitely helped. From when it happened, I could put a plan in place to be ready for this game. We've had longer than we had for the other ankle injuries and it's worked out well. I'm in a good place."

Kane said he had chatted to Gareth Southgate, the England manager, over the weekend. "He wanted to wish me luck for this week," Kane said. "He knows it's a massive game for our players and the Liverpool team, as well. I guess he'll have a few happy play-



Tottenham Hotspur's Harry Kane takes part in a training session yesterday. (AFP)

ers and a few unhappy players when we meet up but we've always said when we meet up with England, it's into England mode.

"If I'm good enough to play one game [against Liverpool], then I'm good enough to play as many games as I can [with England]. After my last injury, I came back and played six or seven games on the spin. There are no worries from my point of view."

"We'll probably have four weeks off in the off-season and in those weeks, it's for me to do a lot of rehab, continue the process and not just switch off. When you look at the injuries, a lot of them have been contact, tackles. I've been unfortunate but, of course, when something happens four or five times, you always look to see if there are any improvements you can make."

Kane gave an insight into the emotions he felt when he watched Spurs beat Man-

chester City in the quarter-final and Ajax in the semi-final - both on away goals. Spurs survived at City when Raheem Sterling had what stood to be a stoppage-time winner ruled out after VAR review while they edged through in Amsterdam after Lucas Moura's 96th-minute goal.

"I watched the City game at home and when Raheem scored, one of my mates just left the room and all of a sudden we're calling him back," Kane said. "It was just crazy. I was in the directors' bit for the Ajax game, surrounded by Ajax fans. Slowly, it started to change in the second half and right at the end I said to Davinson [Sanchez], let's go down and be with the team. Then, all of a sudden, we scored and we jumped up and sprinted down the tunnel to be there when the game was over. It was an amazing experience."

Belotti recalled, Balotelli out of Italy squad

Milan: Torino forward Andrea Belotti has been recalled but Marseille's Mario Balotelli was left of Italy's 33-man squad named yesterday for Euro 2020 qualifiers against Greece and Bosnia next month.

Belotti, who has been absent from the Azzurri since last September, was included on coach Roberto Mancini's list, with AC Milan goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma ruled out with a hamstring injury.

Balotelli, who has scored eight goals in 15 games since joining the French club in January has not featured on the international stage since September.

Roma's Antonio Mirante, who received one call-up under former Italy coach Antonio Conte, comes in for Donnarumma, with Atalanta goalkeeper Pierluigi Gollini also handed a first call-up after his side's

first-ever Champions League qualification.

Cagliari forward Leonardo Pavolletti has been preferred up front along with Belotti, Stephan El Shaarawy, and Sampdoria's Fabio Quagliarella, 36, the top scorer in Serie A with 26 goals this season.

In defence are Chelsea's Emerson Palmieri, Torino's Armando Izzo and Juventus pair Leonardo Bonucci and Giorgio Chiellini.

Youngsters Moise Kean, Federico Chiesa, Nicolo Barella and Lorenzo Pellegrini have been included ahead of the European Under-21 Championships.

Italy play Greece on June 8 in Athens before welcoming Bosnia to Turin on June 11.

The Azzurri are top of Group J - which also includes Finland, Armenia and Liechtenstein - after two wins from two.

ITALY SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Alessio Cragno, Pierluigi Gollini; Salvatore Sirigu, Antonio Mirante

Defenders: Francesco Acerbi, Cristiano Biraghi, Leonardo Bonucci, Giorgio Chiellini, Mattia De Sciglio, Emerson Palmieri, Alessandro Florenzi, Armando Izzo, Gianluca Mancini, Alessio Romagnoli, Leonardo Spinazzola

Midfielders: Nicolo Barella, Federico Bernardeschi, Bryan Cristante, Jorginho, Lorenzo Pellegrini, Stefano Sensi, Marco Verratti, Nicolo Zaniolo

Strikers: Andrea Belotti, Federico Chiesa, Stephan El Shaarawy, Vincenzo Grifo, Ciro Immobile, Lorenzo Insigne, Moise Kean, Leonardo Pavolletti, Matteo Politano, Fabio Quagliarella

FOCUS

Referee hopes bizarre goal is his last

Reuters
Amsterdam

Some football teams gripe about playing against 12 men when a referee's decisions go against them but few have more cause for complaint than Dutch side Harkemase Boys, who were left fuming when a whistler scored against them on Saturday.

Footage of Maurice Paarhuis accidentally scoring for Hoek against Harkemase Boys has attracted almost 5m views on Twitter (@HarkemaseBoys).

The referee told Dutch newspapers yesterday he had no option but to award the goal in the

lower-league game.

"The ball hit my foot. I tried to get my leg out of the way but I couldn't do it on time," said Paarhuis, who had a tough time explaining why the goal should stand to the home side.

"The players of Harkemase Boys were asking: 'What's happening here?' But in these cases the referee is a so-called 'dead element' and that means I had no option but to award a goal."

In the end the goal mattered little as Harkemase Boys ran out 4-2 winners, and while the game's laws dictated that the goal had to stand a change is being brought in next season. The ball will be deemed out of play "... when it touches a match offi-

cial, remains on the field of play and a team starts a promising attack, or the ball goes directly into the goal or the team in possession of the ball changes?"

Play is to be restarted with a dropped ball.

Paarhuis says he sees the funny side of the incident and has been inundated with messages. "My mobile is full of quips from people across the football world. You can believe some of them have approached me to become a striker for their team."

Paarhuis has been a referee since the age of 16 but also played at amateur level. "It's not my first goal, I got a couple as a player," he added. "But I hope that it is both my first and last as a referee."

FOCUS

Qatar squad arrives in Rio for Copa America

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The Qatar squad arrived in Rio de Janeiro yesterday, to kick off their final phase of preparations for the Copa America, which will take place in Brazil from June 14 to July 7.

The squad consists of 28 players selected by Spanish coach Felix Sanchez. The first batch of players had left Doha on May 22 for the training camp in Texas. The second batch left Doha on Sunday, with players from Al Sadd, Al Duhail and Al Rayyan players boarding the flight after their final round of AFC Champions League matches.

Sanchez's men will train in Rio, before they lock horns with hosts Brazil in a friendly match at the Mani Garincha Stadium in Brasilia on June 5.

They will also play another friendly on June 9, with the opponent yet to be determined. Sanchez will announce the final list of 23 players following the friendly against Brazil.

Asian champions Qatar will make their Copa America debut and are in Group B along with Argentina, Colombia and Paraguay. Japan and Qatar are the two guest teams in the 12-team tournament that also features Brazil, Peru, Uruguay, Bolivia, Venezuela, Chile and Ecuador.



Members of the Qatar team pose after their arrival at the Rio de Janeiro airport yesterday, ahead of the Copa America, which will take place in Brazil from June 14 to July 7.

SPOTLIGHT

Cech hopes to haunt Chelsea in Europa League final farewell

'Now my sole focus is to win the Europa League with Arsenal'

AFP
London

Petr Cech will bring down the curtain on a glittering playing career in strange circumstances as the Arsenal goalkeeper faces his former and potentially future employers Chelsea in the Europa League final tomorrow. Cech, 37, enjoyed the best years of his career at Stamford Bridge, winning 13 trophies including four Premier League titles and the Champions League in 11 seasons with Chelsea before moving across London to Arsenal in 2015.

And his close relationship with Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich looks set to see him return to the Blues in the coming weeks as the club's new sporting director. Cech lost his status as Arsenal's number one during Unai Emery's first season in charge, with Bernd Leno taking over in the Premier League since September, but the Czech veteran has started all of Arsenal's knockout games to reach the Europa League final.

The success of Arsenal's season depends not only on lifting a first European trophy for 25 years in Baku, but also on ensuring Champions League qualification that will come with victory. Emery therefore has the difficult decision on whether to give Cech a fitting farewell, or make the cold but calculated choice of playing his first-choice 'keeper' in Leno.

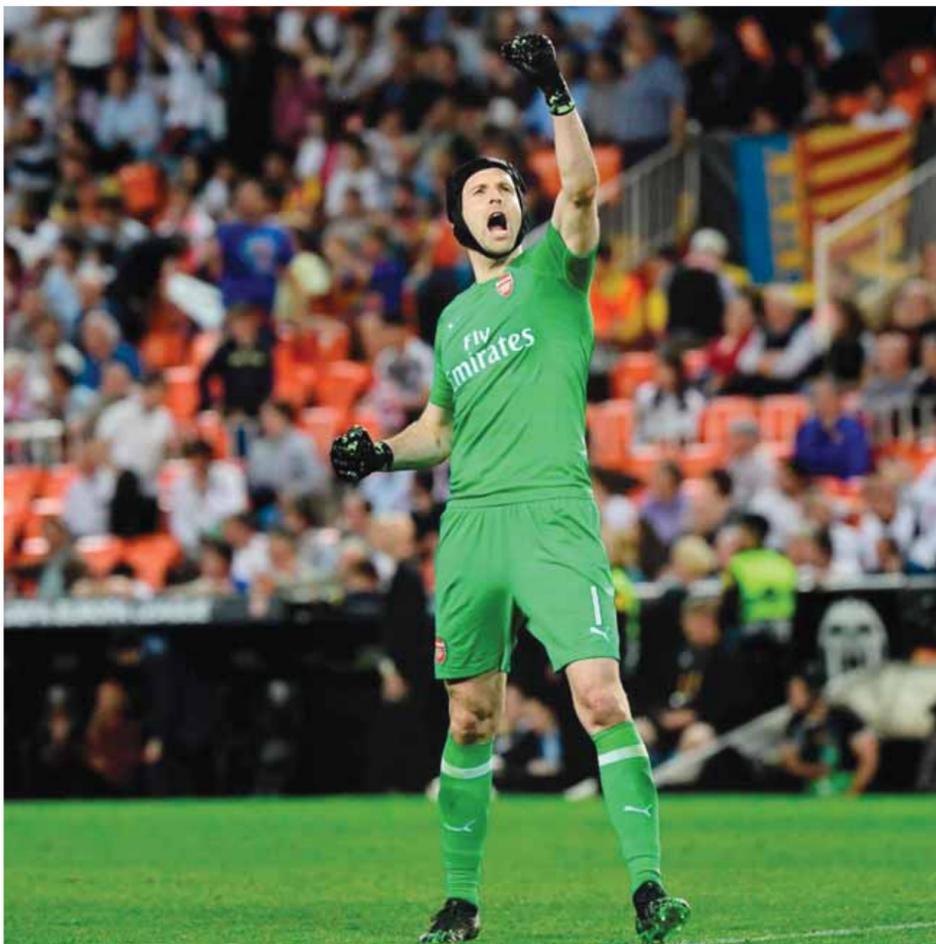
"I'll make a decision about my future after the last game," said Cech as news spread about his imminent return to Chelsea. "Now my sole focus is to win the Europa League with Arsenal."

Emery believes Cech has the experience and professionalism to shut out any distractions arising from a potential return to his old club. "Speaking about Petr Cech, we can be here three days and it is all positive things," said Emery.

"I only know him this year but he is amazing. Amazing like a person, amazing like a goalkeeper. His past, his experience, is awesome. He is here because he deserves to be here. He was playing the last matches with a big performance. I want to enjoy this final with him and I am a privileged coach to work with him."

A man of many talents, the Czech speaks five languages and his love of the drums saw him release a charity single earlier this month alongside Queen drummer Roger Taylor. However, it was on the field he truly shone despite a horrific head injury in 2006 that fractured his skull and briefly threatened his life.

After emergency surgery, Cech returned to the field just three months



Goalkeeper Petr Cech enjoyed the best years of his career at Stamford Bridge, winning 13 trophies including four Premier League titles and the Champions League in 11 seasons with Chelsea before moving across London to Arsenal in 2015.

later, but had to sport his now trademark helmet to protect his skull from further damage for the rest of his career. It did not hold him back as Cech proved a reliable last line of defence during a decade in which managers came and went at Stamford Bridge.

His crowning glory came saving penalties in extra-time and the shootout as Chelsea upset the odds to finally lift the Champions League in 2012, beat-

ing Bayern Munich in the final. The Europa League followed a season later, but Thibaut Courtois's return from a three-year loan spell at Atletico Madrid saw Cech lose his place as Jose Mourinho's number one.

Another player may have been forced to look further afield for a new club, but Cech's close relationship with Abramovich saw the Russian billionaire clear the way for a move to Arsenal. Cech has not

hit the same heights at the Emirates as in his early days at Chelsea, but still went on to become the first goalkeeper to register 200 Premier League clean sheets, reflecting his consistency over 15 years.

One more chapter of a fabulous career could still be written in Baku before Cech hangs up his gloves.

"My last dream was to play this European final with Arsenal and the last step is to win it," he said.

SPONSORSHIP

Ooredoo supports Qatar football team

Ooredoo announced yesterday its sponsorship of Qatar's national football team under a two-year contract starting in 2019. Ooredoo will be sponsoring the major upcoming tournaments, including Copa America. Ooredoo's sponsorship of the national team follows the victory of the team at the 2019 Asian Cup in an unprecedented achievement for Qatari football.

Speaking of the sponsorship, Sheikh Abdulla bin Mohammed bin Saud al-Thani, Chairman, Ooredoo, said: "As part of our social responsibility strategy and our continuous support to Qatari sports, we're thrilled to be supporting our amazing national football team, who has deservedly won the Asian Cup 2019 and accomplished a historic achievement for our country."

Sheikh Abdulla added: "In a few days, our national team will be participating in Copa America for the first time and we wish them the best of luck. We're confident that the talented team members will do a great job and will honour Qatari football again."

Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani, President of the Qatar Football Association, said: "I would like to thank Ooredoo for



Ooredoo Chairman Sheikh Abdulla bin Mohammed bin Saud al-Thani.

their great support to the football team, which highlights our decade-long relationship with the leading telecom brand. We look forward to more cooperation and work with our partner Ooredoo to support Qatari football. This sponsorship demonstrates the company's commitment to support Qatari sports in general, and football in particular."

Ooredoo is a key supporter of the Football Federation, contributing effectively to supporting the UEFA Championships and sponsoring many tournaments and events.

INJURY CONCERN

Kante misses training but Chelsea refuse to rule him out of final

By Dominic Fifield
The Guardian

Chelsea have not given up hope of N'Golo Kante playing a part in the Europa League final, despite the midfielder missing training yesterday to have treatment on a knee injury. Kante was due to travel to Baku with the squad yesterday afternoon and his fitness will be closely monitored before a decision is made as to whether he plays against Arsenal tomorrow, with Ross Barkley standing by to step in.

Kante, who had only just recovered from a hamstring complaint that ruled him out of Chelsea's previous two matches, twisted a knee while making a challenge in a training session on Saturday. Although initial impressions of his prospects had been far from positive, the injury appeared to have settled by the time the player reported back on Sunday afternoon to be assessed by the medical department.

He drove himself into the Cob-



ham complex again on Monday and was apparently moving freely enough, though he sat out the team's final session before their departure for Azerbaijan and remains a doubt for the final. Chelsea's options for the game have already been limited after Antonio Rudiger, Callum Hudson-Odoi and Ruben Loftus-Cheek were ruled out with long-term injuries over the run-in.