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NBA | Page 5

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FOOTBALL | Page 7

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GULF TIMES SPORT



CRICKET

India call up Pant as cover for injured Dhawan

Page 2

EDUCATION CITY STADIUM FAST NEARING COMPLETION



A view of the Education City Stadium yesterday which is fast nearing completion well ahead of the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar. Known as the 'Diamond in the Desert' it features a range of sustainability features, including: direct access to public transport via the Education City tram system link to Doha Metro; low toxicity indoor materials which provide a healthy indoor environment and LED sports lighting which offers better light quality at lower energy consumption. In addition, the stadium is wrapped in thermally efficient and reflective fabric that acts as shading to protect the building from direct sunlight. It also benefits from water efficient fixtures and fittings, uses recycled water for irrigation and is designed to allow for the disassembly of the upper tier, including 20,000 seats. PICTURES: Jayan Orma



2019 ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP

Warner century sets up Aussie win over Pakistan

Mohamed Amir's career-best figures of five for 30 in vain as Pakistan make a hash of the chase in Taunton

AFP
Taunton

David Warner scored his first international century since completing a ball-tampering ban as Australia returned to winning ways at the World Cup with a 41-run victory over Pakistan at Taunton yesterday.

Warner made 107 and, with Australia captain Aaron Finch (82), got the defending champions off to a flying start with an opening stand of 146 – the highest partnership for any wicket at this World Cup to date.

Mohamed Amir dragged Pakistan back into the game with career-best figures of five for 30 in 10 overs but Australia still managed to post a challenging score of 307, which ultimately proved beyond their opponents. "It means a lot to a batter to get a century," said man-of-the-match Warner. "It was a great effort from Pakistan in the end but our bowlers bowled excellent. They probably got closer than we expected."

Pakistan, after a middle-order collapse that saw them lose three wickets for 11 runs in 15 balls, were all but beaten at 200 for seven in the 34th over. But captain Sarfaraz Ahmed (40) and the big-hitting Wahab Riaz (45) gave them renewed hope with a stand of 64. Australia, who lost to India on Sunday, were again looking to Mitchell Starc to get them out of a tight spot, as had done in an earlier win over the West Indies and the fast bowler duly delivered with 2-43.

He had Wahab caught behind got off a thin edge, although it needed an Australia review of an original not out decision to leave Pakistan 264-8. Two balls later, Amir played on for a duck before Glenn Maxwell ended the match with a brilliant direct hit run out of Sarfaraz. Pakistan's chase started badly when Fakhar Zaman fell for a duck uppercutting Cummins to Kane Richardson at third man. Babar Azam was in superb touch, with 28 of his 30 runs coming in fours, before he mishooked Nathan Coulter-Nile to deep backward square leg.

Opener Imam-ul-Haq was upping the tempo when he gloved Pat



Australia's David Warner celebrates after reaching his century against Pakistan at The County Ground in Taunton, southwest England, yesterday. AT RIGHT: Pakistan's Mohamed Amir and teammates walk back after Australia's innings.

Cummins (3-33) down the legside to wicket-keeper Alex Carey. He made 53. Finch, an occasional slow bowler, grabbed a real bonus wicket when Mohamed Hafeez (46) hit a rank full toss straight to Starc at deep square leg.

And when Shoaib Malik was brilliantly caught for nought by a diving Carey after inside edging Cummins, Pakistan were in dire straits at 147-5. Both Warner and Steve Smith, also returning from a year-long ban for ball-tampering, had been jeered by fans in previous games but Pakistan fans largely heeded an appeal from Sarfaraz not to boo the pair, preferring to roar chants of "Amir! Amir!"

Warner completed his 15th one-day international hundred when an edge off Shaheen Shah Afridi flew past slip

for four. An elated Warner leapt in the air in celebration but his 111-ball innings ended soon afterwards when he was caught at point off Shaheen, having gone past fifty for the third time in four innings at this World Cup.

"I'm very disappointed," said Sarfaraz. We lost three wickets in 15 balls and that's why we lost. "We conceded too many runs in the first 20 overs apart from Mohamed Amir. We came back and restricted them well but it was a 270-280 pitch.

"We made some runs and got starts but we've got to convert them and go long. If you want to win matches your top four must score runs." Australia have three wins in four matches while Pakistan are struggling, with just one victory in their four games so far.



SCORECARD

AUSTRALIA INNINGS

A. Finch c Hafeez b Amir	82
D. Warner c Imam b Shaheen	107
S. Smith c Asif b Hafeez	10
G. Maxwell b Shaheen	20
S. Marsh c Malik b Amir	23
U. Khawaja c Riaz b Amir	18
A. Carey lbw Amir	20
N. Coulter-Nile c Sarfaraz b Riaz	2
P. Cummins c Sarfaraz b Hasan	2
M. Starc c Malik b Amir	3
K. Richardson not out	1
Extras (lb10, nb3, w6)	19
Total (all out, 49 overs)	307
Fall of wickets: 1-146 (Finch), 2-189	

(Smith), 3-223 (Maxwell), 4-242 (Warner), 5-277 (Khawaja), 6-288 (Marsh), 7-299 (Coulter-Nile), 8-302 (Cummins), 9-304 (Carey), 10-307 (Starc)
Bowling: Amir 10-2-30-5 (1w); Shaheen 10-0-70-2 (1nb, 1w); Hasan 10-0-67-1 (1nb, 3w); Riaz 8-0-44-1 (1w); Hafeez 7-0-60-1; Malik 4-0-26-0 (1nb)

PAKISTAN INNINGS

Imam-ul-Haq c Carey b Cummins	53
Fakhar Zaman c Richardson b Cummins	0
Babar Azam c Richardson b Coulter-Nile	30
Mohamed Hafeez c Starc b Finch	46
Sarfaraz Ahmed run out	40

Shoaib Malik c Carey b Cummins 0
Asif Ali c Carey b Richardson 5
Hasan Ali c Khawaja b Richardson 32
Wahab Riaz c Carey b Starc 45
Mohamed Amir b Starc 0
Shaheen Shah Afridi not out 1
Extras (lb4, nb1, w9) 14
Total (all out, 45.4 overs) 266
Fall of wickets 1-2 (Zaman), 2-56 (Babar), 3-136 (Imam), 4-146 (Hafeez), 5-147 (Malik), 6-160 (Asif), 7-200 (Hasan), 8-264 (Riaz), 9-265 (Amir), 10-266 (Sarfaraz)
Bowling: Cummins 10-0-33-3 (1nb); Starc 9-1-43-2 (2w); Richardson 8.4-0-62-2 (2w); Coulter-Nile 9-0-53-1 (2w); Maxwell 7-0-58-0 (1w); Finch 2-0-13-1 (1w)



SPOTLIGHT

Weather a major concern in Nottingham



Kohli attends a practice session at Trent Bridge yesterday.

IANS
Nottingham

The unpredictable English weather has struck the 2019 edition of the World Cup. While ICC Chief Executive David Richardson has made it clear that having reserve days in the group stages would have been a logistical nightmare, the current scenario has dampened the spirits of the teams as incessant rain has washed off three games already. And even as India prepare to take on New

Zealand in Nottingham today, the rain threat looms large once again.

On match day, the forecast shows that the temperature in Nottingham could be as low as 13 degrees celsius and drizzles can be expected.

The met department also expects 'heavy prolonged rain' that could lead to 'localised flooding'. While the overhead conditions are expected to get better by afternoon, a rain-curtailed game isn't something that either team will be looking at as the D/L method could come into play.

Persistent rainfall this week has seen

little cricket played. In the game between South Africa and West Indies, the former managed to reach 29/2 in 7.3 overs before rains brought an end to the proceedings. The next game between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka was abandoned without a ball being bowled. Wednesday's game between Australia and Pakistan would be the first time this week when a venue doesn't have rain threat as the weather in Taunton shows overcast conditions only.

Richardson also has thrown light on how the unpredictable English weather has struck this time. "This is extremely

unseasonal weather. In the last couple of days, we have experienced more than twice the average monthly rainfall for June which is usually the third driest month in the UK. In 2018, there was just 2mm of rain in June but the last 24 hours alone has seen around 100mm rainfall in the south-east of England.

"When a match is affected by weather conditions, the venue team works closely with match officials and ground staff to ensure that we have the best possible opportunity to play cricket, even if it is a reduced overs game," he said on Tuesday.

FOCUS

India call up Pant as Dhawan cover

'We will be observing Dhawan and around the 10th or 12th day we will know where he stands'

AFP
Nottingham

Rishabh Pant has been called up as cover for the injured Shikhar Dhawan in India's World Cup squad, team chiefs confirmed yesterday.

Dhawan injured his hand during the team's 36-run victory against Australia on Sunday and remains a doubt for the rest of the 50-over tournament.

The left-handed opener has been put under medical observation and Pant will join the team in England and Wales and stay on as standby.

"We will be observing Dhawan and around the 10th or 12th day we will know where he stands," India's assistant coach Sanjay Bangar said ahead of today's match against New Zealand at Trent Bridge.

"We do not want to rule out a precious player like Shikhar. As far as batting order goes, KL (Rahul) moves top of the order and there are various options the team can utilise going into the next game."

Bangar added: "If and when a replacement is required, it's always good to have a replacement coming in and practising with the team as a standby."

Dhawan made 117, putting on 127 for the opening wicket with Rohit Sharma to set up India's second straight win in the World Cup against defending champions Australia.



File photo of India's Rishabh Pant.

Bangar said India would miss Dhawan but the team had enough strength in depth to maintain their momentum in the round-robin tournament.

"Shikhar will definitely be missed in the next three to four games but we have great back-up for each position," he said. "With that we should be able to make it up."

"He (Pant) bats in the middle order and obviously being a left-

hander helps and he was named in the standbys as well, so the team management has gone and picked him," he said of Pant's call-up.

Team management said Pant would join the side in Manchester ahead of the match against arch-rivals Pakistan, which takes place on Sunday.

The 21-year-old, a flamboyant wicketkeeper-batsman, made his Test debut in England last

year and scored his maiden Test century during the series.

Pant, who is being groomed to take over from MS Dhoni as first-choice wicketkeeper in all formats of the game, also underlined his worth with an unbeaten 159 against Australia in Sydney earlier this year.

The World Cup has been badly affected by rain, with two matches abandoned and one no result, and Bangar said in the circum-

stances it was vital for opening batsmen to provide a solid base.

"In this part of the world overhead conditions do make a big difference so the batsmen have to be a bit circumspect and they have to make those adjustments," said Bangar.

"In overcast conditions and with two new balls (from either end) you always want the top order to show that discipline and put us in a great position."



South Africa captain Faf du Plessis is watched by teammates as he throws a ball during a training session.

ADVICE

Benkenstein warns South Africa to adapt to pressure

AFP
London

South Africa batting coach Dale Benkenstein has warned his struggling side to adapt to the unique demands of the World Cup or face an embarrassing exit.

The Proteas are battling to avoid their worst ever World Cup performance after losing their first three matches before Monday's washout against the West Indies.

With minnows Afghanistan next on the schedule in Cardiff on Saturday, Benkenstein says South Africa's players must learn how to prepare for the challenge on playing different opponents in each match.

The World Cup's round-robin group stage, where all 10 teams play each other once, is far different from the usual block of matches against the same opponent that national sides have on their tours.

So far, they have failed with the challenges posed by England, Bangladesh and India.

"The difference in tournaments to international cricket is that in regular series you play the same opposition four or five times so you have an opportunity

to start slow, to sum them up and then you can take them down," Benkenstein said.

"Here, you are playing one-off games. You are playing on different wickets and against different teams in every match.

"I really feel we are one game away from getting things right. Then the confidence levels will be up there and we may peak at the right time."

South Africa have never faced Afghanistan in an ODI before and must win to keep alive their slender hopes of qualifying for the semi-finals.

Benkenstein wants to see the batting line-up spend more time at the crease, especially as no South African batsman has scored a century in the tournament.

"The message is that the batters have got to step up and we haven't," he said.

"I feel like we are batting well but we just haven't done it long enough. Everyone has got in.

"We've had opportunities to have hundred partnerships and win matches but we haven't done it.

"Sometimes we don't get that balance right. We try and accelerate maybe a bit too fast rather than getting our heads down and ticking it over."

BOTTOMLINE

NZ to reap left-right benefit against India, says Ross Taylor

Reuters
Nottingham

New Zealand's steady supply of left-handed batsmen will come in handy in today's World Cup match against an Indian team without that variety in their top order, senior Kiwi batsman Ross Taylor said on the eve of the match.

Opener Shikhar Dhawan's injury has not only robbed India of a left-right pair at the top of their order but has also left the two-times champions without a southpaw in the top half of their batting.

In contrast, New Zealand have three left-handers in their top six, including opener Colin Munro.

"Obviously Shikhar is a big loss to India," Taylor told reporters at Trent Bridge on Wednesday.

"He and Rohit Sharma have a very good partnership, and I think they complement each other well because they're right and left-handed.

"I think we've had a similar balanced side for a long time,



New Zealand's Ross Taylor attends a press conference at Trent Bridge yesterday.

and when you do have a right-left hand combination, it does put pressure in different ways on the bowling opposition."

A left-right combination forces bowlers to alter line and length while the fielding cap-

tain is also compelled to tinker with field settings every time the batsmen change ends.

Taylor said such variety in the batting lineup was necessary to make the most of the World Cup grounds.

"A lot of these grounds in the UK have a short boundary to one side, and if you've got two right-handers or two left-handers, you can't exploit it as much..."

"It's traditionally a short boundary here. If that is the

Shastri and team to get 45-day extension after WC

New Delhi: The Indian coaching staff, including chief coach Ravi Shastri, will be handed a 45-day extension after the ongoing World Cup even though their contract ends with the showpiece event.

Besides Shastri, the support staff also includes assistant coach Sanjay Bangar, bowling coach Bharat Arun and fielding coach R. Sridhar. The decision was taken by the Supreme Court-appointed Committee of Administrators (CoA) and was uploaded in the minutes on BCCI's website.

"After some discussion, the CoA decided that the contracts for the support staff can be extended by 45 days on an ad-hoc basis and that interviews of the support staff should be conducted after the World Cup," the minutes read.

"As the Cricket Advisory Committee's (CAC) involvement is required for the purpose of selecting a head coach, the BCCI

management should speak to the members of the CAC and ascertain what is their expectation vis-a-vis remuneration/compensation for their services and a draft of the terms of reference for the CoA should be prepared and circulated for CoA's consideration," it added.

CAC members Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly and VVS Laxman had made it clear to BCCI ombudsman D.K. Jain that they were not aware of their exact role and scope. In fact, they also made it clear that if a question of conflict arises due to their IPL roles, they were happy to stay away from functioning as CAC members.

But Clause 24 (5) of the new BCCI constitution says that while the CEO will appoint team officials for the Indian teams, the head coach of each team shall be appointed by the CAC. So, the CoA needs to find a quick solution.



FOCUS

Amir on top of the world despite Pakistan's defeat

'We have so many Pakistani fans at all England grounds and when they shout my name it pumps me up'



Pakistan's Mohamed Amir (C) celebrates his fifth wicket against Australia at The County Ground in Taunton yesterday.



Australia's David Warner poses for a photo with Pakistan fans after the match yesterday.

AFP
Taunton

Pace spearhead Mohamed Amir soaked up the adulation from Pakistan fans as he roared to the top of the World Cup bowling charts with career-best figures against Australia yesterday.

Amir was back in Taunton, in southwest England, where he made his return to first-class cricket three years ago following a ban for spot-fixing.

The 27-year-old was a rising star in world cricket when his career came to a stunning halt in 2010 after both he and new-ball partner Mohamed Asif were caught bowling no-balls on the orders of then Pakistan captain Salman Butt as part of a newspaper sting. The trio all received five-year bans from cricket and jail terms, taking a huge chunk out of the left-arm paceman's career.

The intervening years have not been easy for Amir and he almost missed what is his first World Cup after taking just five wickets in 14 matches before a recent one-day

international series in England.

He did not bowl in the rain-ravaged first match of that bilateral series against England and missed the last four games with chicken pox. England won the series 4-0.

Now he is back with a bang, taking five for 30 in his 10 overs yesterday to improve on his previous best figures of 4-28 against Sri Lanka a decade ago.

With the crowd chanting "Amir, Amir, Shabash" (come on) from the stands in Taunton, he delivered two maiden overs in his first spell as Australia openers Aaron Finch and David Warner played and missed.

Amir conceded just 11 runs off his opening four overs and then returned to snare Australia captain Finch before taking the wickets of Usman Khawaja, Shaun Marsh, Alex Carey and Mitchell Starc.

His efforts helped peg Australia back to 307 but that ultimately proved too much for Pakistan, who lost wickets consistently during their reply to slip to a 41-run loss – their second defeat of the World Cup.

Australia century-maker

Warner hailed Amir, describing his second spell as "fantastic".

Amir's haul against Australia took him to 10 wickets for the tournament after three matches at an average of 12.30 and an impressive economy rate of 4.73.

Last week Amir told AFP how he was thankful he was for the backing of Pakistan's passionate supporters.

"It's really amazing, I mean the crowd support," Amir said. "We have so many Pakistani fans at all England grounds and when they shout my name it pumps me up."

Amir was left out of Pakistan's preliminary squad for the World Cup but he made it into the final 15 and has proved his worth from the start of the tournament in England and Wales.

His World Cup debut was a rare Pakistan highlight after they slumped to 105 all out against the West Indies, with Amir taking 3-26 in a seven-wicket loss at Trent Bridge.

He was among the wickets again at Trent Bridge, but this time in a winning cause, with 2-67 as Pakistan shocked tournament favourites England last week.

COMMENT

Gayle relishing taking on England quicks, says Gibson



West Indies Chris Gayle signs autographs for school children during nets in Southampton yesterday.

AFP
London

Chris Gayle will "relish" the chance to take on England quicks Mark Wood and Jofra Archer, according to West Indies coach Corey Collymore.

Gayle has hinted he could retire from one-day cricket af-

ter the World Cup and is eager to bow out on a high befitting his self-appointed "Universe Boss" moniker.

The 39-year-old proved there was plenty left in the tank when England toured the Caribbean earlier this year, smashing a record 39 sixes in a drawn five-match series.

The teams reconvene at the Hampshire Bowl tomorrow, when Gayle can expect to face a barrage from Barbados-born

Archer and Durham's Wood.

Both men have hit 95 miles per-hour (153kph) since the start of the tournament, but very little worries the big-hitting Jamaican.

"Chris thrives on that. I have known him since he was 16 and he has always loved a challenge," said Collymore, the West Indies bowling coach.

"He has always enjoyed the challenge of fast bowling so I expect him to relish that. I have

known Archer for a while and I saw Wood in the Caribbean.

"They are both very impressive, as we have seen throughout this tournament."

Archer could have been bowling for the West Indies, had they persuaded him to pursue an international future with them, but even in his absence they are a frightening prospect.

In Oshane Thomas, Andre Russell, Sheldon Cottrell and

Shannon Gabriel they have four seamers capable of making the batsmen fear, leaving Collymore to predict a fiery encounter.

"I did work with him (Archer) when he was a lot younger in Barbados. He was very impressive. The skills he shows now are ones he always had so we are expecting more of the same from him," he said.

"But we have quick bowlers too so it should be a lively game"

SPOTLIGHT

England's Buttler set to face West Indies in World Cup clash



Jos Buttler during a community coaching session yesterday.

AFP
London

England head coach Trevor Bayliss is optimistic that Jos Buttler will be fit to play in tomorrow's World Cup match with the West Indies in Southampton.

Buttler hurt his right hip while batting in England's win against Bangladesh, hobbling for the remainder of his knock and passing on wicketkeeping duties to Jonny Bairstow for the West Indies innings.

He was scheduled to join his team-mates during a net session at the Hampshire Bowl on Wednesday and Bayliss said: "Yes, he's fine. He'll be taking part in today's practice fully."

"It was a little bit precautionary the other day. He said he could have kept, but he wasn't really sure if he would be able to run after a high catch."

Asked if Buttler might play as a specialist batsman to lighten his workload in the field, Bayliss kept his options open.

"I haven't really thought about it. We'll make that decision in the next day or so," the Australian said.

"We'll see how he pulls up and how he performs at practice. I'm expecting him to play a full part."

Buttler has been in fine form at the World Cup, with scores of 18, 103 and 64 all coming at punishing strike rates.

Should Buttler fail to prove his fitness, Hampshire's James Vince would be the likeliest pick in his role as spare batsman.

All-rounder Moeen Ali is also eyeing a return to the team after sitting out the 106-run victory over the Bangladesh in Cardiff. His off-breaks were deemed surplus to requirements in a seam-heavy attack at Sophia Gardens, but he could come back into consideration in Southampton.

RUGBY

Legacy on the lips with 100 days until World Cup

A research shows Asia has more rugby fans (112mn) than any other continent



(From left) Former World Rugby Players of the Year Shane Williams of Wales, Bryan Habana of South Africa, Japanese players Ayumu Goromaru and Kensuke Hatakeyama at the 100 Day to Go Kick-Off event for the Rugby World Cup 2019 in Tokyo yesterday. (AFP)

Reuters
Tokyo

With 100 days to go until the start of the 2019 Rugby World Cup, organisers have turned one eye towards the legacy the tournament will leave in Japan and Asia as a whole. When World Rugby made the decision 10 years ago to award the tournament to Japan – making them the first hosts outside of rugby's traditional heartland – they did so with the intention of broadening the game in the world's most populous continent.

At a ceremony in Tokyo yesterday to mark the 100 days to go countdown, World Rugby CEO Brett Gosper made legacy the cornerstone of his speech. "As the first tournament in Asia, Japan was always going to be a step change for the sport of rugby," said the Australian.

"This tournament will probably cause

more exciting change here and around the world than any other World Cup ever has. World Rugby awarded the hosting rights to Japan 10 years ago, recognising the clear and compelling opportunity to unlock rugby's potential in Asia, the world's most populous and youthful continent."

As well as boosting participation and improving infrastructure in Japan, a key aim for World Rugby has been to use the tournament as a way into the elusive, and potentially lucrative, Asian market. Research commissioned by the world governing body showed Asia had more fans (112mn) than any other continent, with 33mn fans of the sport in China and 25mn in India. According to Gosper, 1.16mn youngsters have now been exposed to rugby in Asia through World Rugby's Asia 1 Million project. "The reason why the World Rugby council voted to come here was all about legacy... to drive participation in this part of the world, whether it be Japan or Asia," Gosper said ahead of

the 100 days to go ceremony. "The Japan Rugby Union and Asia Rugby have been very active in exploiting the opportunity that is out there to do that."

With Tokyo-based Super Rugby team Sunwolves being dropped from the competition from 2020 and the Japanese Rugby Football Union (JRFU) seemingly at crossroads following the resignation of honorary chairman Yoshiro Mori, Japanese rugby faces an uncertain future.

Kyodo News has reported that Mori, a former Japan prime minister, stepped down because of the JRFU's lack of vision for the sport after the World Cup. Alan Gilpin, the World Cup's tournament director, on Wednesday said that while he understood Mori's frustrations, World Rugby remained confident in Japan's future.

Much of this optimism stems from Japan's role in the governing body's proposed Nations Championship.

World Rugby has proposed an elite in-

ternational tournament – to start in 2022 – that includes the existing Six Nations teams and an expanded Rugby Championship. Gosper and Gilpin both stressed the importance of incorporating Japan in the top tier of any such tournament.

"If Japan was sitting at the top table, then that would be the best possible legacy for us for the national team and for the fans going forward," said Gosper. World Rugby has yet to finalise the plans and any decision would have to be approved by the game's major powerbrokers, including SANZAAR, the southern hemisphere's governing body.

"The Nations Championship is a big opportunity for them because it means Japan will be playing the best teams in the world week in and week out," stressed Gilpin. In short-term the outlook is rosy. With 100 days to go, World Rugby said that 80% of all tickets for Japan 2019 have been sold and 40 of the 48 games are already a sell-out.

TENNIS ROUND-UP

Nadal considered ending season after Indian Wells injury

French Open champion Rafa Nadal has said he nearly ended his season after being forced to withdraw from the Indian Wells semi-finals with a knee injury in March but played through the pain at Roland Garros to clinch a record-extending 12th title.

Nadal conceded a walkover to Roger Federer at Indian Wells and skipped the Miami Open before returning to the tour for the clay season, where he lost three semi-finals in Rome and Paris. "Mentally, after Indian Wells, I suffered a major downturn," the Spaniard told the ATP website. "I considered shutting down my season to see if my body would recuperate instead of playing through injury after injury."

"Another option was to press on and play through the pain. Either way, the outlook was bleak. It required a change of mindset... and that doesn't happen overnight. I was reluctant and hesitant to return. Physically, because of another tendon tear in my knee, and on top of going through all the treatment required in the recovery process, there was dealing with the pain."

The 33-year-old said he had struggled to stay motivated because of the constant pain but had been determined to acquit himself well at Roland Garros. "Between the level of pain and just being sidelined, there came a time when I just felt tired of all of this," he added.

"I was sick of always being in pain. After Indian Wells, I took a moment to make sense of all of it... I promised myself that I would play through Roland Garros with the attitude and energy necessary to confront all obstacles in my way."

Nadal's French Open victory put him two Grand Slam titles behind Federer's all-time record of 20 and the Spaniard has announced his intention not to play again until Wimbledon, which begins on July 1.

THIEM SEEKS TO END SERENA ROW WITH MIXED DOUBLES OFFER

Austria's Dominic Thiem has extended an olive branch to Serena

Williams after their media room misunderstanding at the French Open by offering to partner the American in mixed doubles at Wimbledon or the US Open.

Thiem, who finished runner-up at Roland Garros, was left fuming after being asked to make way for Williams at a post-match news conference following her third round defeat in the first week of the tournament.

Williams, who had just lost in straight sets to Sofia Kenin, was pushing organisers to give her a room right away and Thiem accused the American of showing "bad personality" and treating him like "a junior".

"Probably it was not Serena's mistake," he told reporters on Tuesday. "I find her achievements unbelievable, sensational. I would like to make amends with her in Wimbledon or the US Open mixed doubles. In retrospect, it was funny that such an organisational mistake happened at a Grand Slam tournament. What I do not understand is that it blew up so much."

INJURED KVITOVA WITHDRAWS FROM BIRMINGHAM CLASSIC

Two-times defending champion Petra Kvitova withdrawn from next week's Birmingham Classic as she continues to recover from arm injury that forced her to miss the French Open, Britain's Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) said.

Kvitova won the Birmingham event in 2017 in just her second tournament back following a serious knife attack that nearly ended her career, and followed up with a victory over Magdalena Rybarikova to lift the title again last year. The injury comes as a blow for world number five Kvitova ahead of next month's Wimbledon, where she will bid for her third title following triumphs in 2011 and 2014.

The LTA confirmed American Madison Keys has also pulled out of the tournament due to an injury. World number three Karolina Pliskova joins a draw which already features world number one Naomi Osaka and newly-crowned French Open champion Ashleigh Barty.

Gatland ponders smaller squad for Lions tour of South Africa

London: Warren Gatland says he could take a smaller squad for the 2021 British and Irish Lions tour of South Africa and fly in stop-gap replacements if necessary for what will be the shortest tour in Lions history. Gatland was confirmed as coach for the third successive tour on Wednesday and though the final details of the itinerary are still to be settled, there will be only eight games, including three tests, compared with 10 in New Zealand in 2017.

The tour is also likely to run from July into August, given the extension of the

European domestic seasons, piling pressure on Gatland in terms of preparation. His policy in New Zealand and the victorious Australian tour four years earlier was to guarantee everyone in the squad at least one start in the first three games.

Now he says he might have to take a different approach, beginning the tour with the nucleus of a starting test team already pencilled in.

Asked if the squeezed programme could lead to a smaller squad, the New Zealander said: "Yes, absolutely." "We've also discussed the potential of not

having a midweek game before the first test. The biggest challenge is trying to prepare for that first test in such a short time. If you did pick a smaller squad, you may announce extra players who could come out to cover us for a midweek fixture. We're having discussions around that sort of thing."

He said that giving everyone an opportunity to stake their case – a Lions tradition that has seen players force their way into the test side ahead of pre-tour favourites – might not be practical this time.

"We may have to look at that," he said.

"Do you go with a few more pre-conceived ideas about a test team and perhaps pick accordingly? It's a long way off but those thoughts have been going through my head already. One of the hardest things is what you do off the pitch to try to achieve that harmony and make everyone feel a part of it."

Gatland said he wanted to avoid the approach taken by Clive Woodward for the 2005 tour of New Zealand, when the former England coach effectively split the squad into test and midweek teams.

CRICKET

Women's 'Big Bash' gets own tournament window

Reuters
Melbourne

Australia's professional women's Twenty20 competition has been given its own scheduling window separate from the men's 'Big Bash' in a landmark move hailed by the players' union. The fifth season of the Women's Big Bash League (WBBL) will start in October and culminate in the final weekend on Dec 6-7, providing a lead-in to the women's T20 World Cup which starts in February, Cricket Australia said.

"This is monumental for the women's game," Anthony Everard, Cricket Australia's Executive General Manager Fan Engagement, said. "Moving the

entire tournament to its own standalone period is the first step towards achieving that ultimate goal of being the best women's league in the world, giving the world's best female cricketers from across the globe the platform to show fans what they are capable of."

The men's Big Bash fixtures have yet to be released but the bulk of it will be played in January, when the men's one-day international squad is touring India. The new arrangement will boost broadcast exposure for the women's game, Cricket Australia said.

"This is something we've been building towards and last year's final series has proved that the rebel WBBL is ready to stand on its own two feet," Everard said. "The volume of televised content nearly doubled last season, for

the women's cricketers."

Players union, the Australian Cricketers' Association, said some players would have to balance study and work commitments with the new schedule.

Professional women cricketers receive the same base pay as their male counterparts in Australia for time spent on the playing field but they compete in far less matches and many are unable to support themselves by cricket alone.

"The ACA will continue to work with Cricket Australia and the states to help players adjust to this change," ACA General Manager of Cricket Operations & Player Relations Brendan Drew said. "Nevertheless, the players are extremely excited for the stand-alone tournament and the opportunities it will bring."

SPOTLIGHT

Murray aims for singles return this year



AFP
London

Andy Murray hopes to be back on the singles court later this year, but the British former world number one is setting no time limits on his return. Murray will step up his comeback bid from the hip surgery he underwent in January when he competes in the doubles with Feliciano Lopez at Queen's Club next week.

The 32-year-old then plans to play doubles at Wimbledon, where he has won two of his three singles Grand Slam titles. However, Murray still expects to take his time before returning to singles action, which probably rules out competing at the US Open at the end of August.

"It's baby steps just now," said the Scot. "I'm feeling good, pretty much pain-free and enjoying kind of just training, practising, improving all the time just now. I don't think when Wimbledon finishes that I will just step onto the singles court the following week and everything's good. I still have quite a lot of work to do before

I'm at a level where I feel like I'll be able to be competitive."

Murray, who last played singles at the Australian Open in January, said he had been making consistent progress but he would probably plateau at some stage. "I hope at some stage this year I would be able to get back to playing singles again," said Murray, speaking at the launch of a new tennis support scheme in partnership with Amazon Prime at the Queen's Club in London.

"When that is, I'm not really interested in putting a time limit on because I'm quite happy just now so I don't need to play singles after Wimbledon or at the US Open. If I can, that would be brilliant, but I don't think that's going to be the case. I think it's going to take a bit longer."

Murray has been training with American Frances Tiafoe but has still not fully tested his recovery with any singles practice matches. "Earlier on I was hitting with singles players but I was more stationary. I was moving them rather than them moving me about. So, I have not played properly singles-wise yet. I am hoping that will come more after Wimbledon."



Rafael Nadal won his 12th French Open title last Sunday. (Reuters)

PREVIEW

Playing for Durant, Warriors up against emotional must-win

Durant made a return in game five on Monday only to go down with a right Achilles tendon injury

AFP
Oakland, United States

Inspired by injured teammate Kevin Durant and facing an emotional must-win game, the Golden State Warriors are counting upon resiliency and fighting spirit to stay alive in the NBA Finals.

Defending champion Golden State, seeking a third consecutive title and fourth in five seasons, entertains Toronto in game six today needing a victory to pull level at 3-3 and force a game seven Sunday at Toronto.

"We're going to have to will ourselves for another 48 minutes to stay alive," Warriors guard Stephen Curry said. "And whatever it's going to take from every single guy in our jersey."

"I don't know if there's going to be a speech in the locker room, if there's going to need to be words at all. We understand the moment and I think we can rally."

Durant, the 2017 and 2018 NBA Finals Most Valuable Player, sat out a month with a right calf injury before making a return in game five Monday only to go down with a right Achilles tendon injury, needing help to leave the court and crutches to exit the arena.

The 30-year-old superstar's brief comeback effort, leading the Warriors in the playoffs with 34.2 points a game, has provided extra motivation for the teammates who saw him give everything he had in the championship quest.

Everybody is facing fatigue at this point. No one cares who is tired or if you're facing a little fatigue. You've got to do what you came here to do anyway

—Draymond Green, Golden State Warriors forward

"We'll be suiting up in front of Oracle Arena and with the amazing atmosphere and opportunity to play for him, and to kind of honor the sacrifice he made in terms of putting his body on the line," Curry said.

"We're going to give everything we got. We're going to fight. We're going to compete."

Golden State guard Klay Thompson will give his efforts



Golden State Warriors guard Quinn Cook (left) passes the ball against Toronto Raptors forward Kawhi Leonard during the fourth quarter of game five of the 2019 NBA Finals at Scotiabank Arena in Toronto, Canada, on Monday. (USA TODAY Sports)

in tribute to Durant. "It obviously inspires you to play harder knowing your best player can't be out there," Thompson said. "You think of him every time you dive for a loose ball or go for a rebound, because I know him and I know how bad he wants to be out there."

Only once in 34 opportunities has a team that trailed 3-1 in the NBA Finals won the title, that coming in 2016 when LeBron James rallied Cleveland over the Warriors. Only three teams have even forced a sev-

enth game. "When we step back on our floor for game six, that's all that matters," Warriors forward Draymond Green said. "Everybody is facing fatigue at this point. No one cares who is tired or if you're facing a little fatigue. You've got to do what you came here to do anyway."

Warriors forward Kevon Looney has a chest injury. Andre Iguodala has a calf injury. But everyone with nagging pain knows they can rest next week. "It's a team full of heart. It's

as simple as that," Warriors center DeMarcus Cousins said. "We're fighters. It's in our DNA. We're going to go down fighting. Period."

END OF A WARRIORS ERA

The Warriors will be playing their final game at Oracle Arena, their home venue since 1971. They leave the NBA's oldest arena for a new \$1 bn home in San Francisco next season and hope to exit Oakland as winners after two earlier finals home losses to the Raptors.

"The biggest advantage is being at Oracle Arena one more time, where our fans can really get behind us," Curry said.

"We'll be ready for it, but there's no more statements needed to be made about who we are as a team and our heart and our competitiveness."

"We want to win this championship. We're going to give everything we got, but I think we're done with proving people wrong or making bold statements with our play. People know who we are."

For the Raptors, top scorer Kawhi Leonard says the secret is to keep doing what put them one win from the first title in their 24-season history and the first by any team from outside the United States.

"Just try to come out and match that emotion and drive, come out and do the same thing, just be mentally focused, try to limit our mistakes and be the aggressor," Leonard said. "Just play hard 48 minutes and see what happens. Play confident."

12 international players available in NBA draft

Twelve international players, led by prospective top-10 pick Sekou Doumbouya of Guinea, remained in the NBA draft at the final deadline to withdraw on Tuesday. Doumbouya, an 18-year-old power forward who plays for Limoges in France, is rated the ninth-best draft prospect by both ESPN and CBS. The NBA released the names of 47 international players who withdrew from the draft Tuesday. Also, two US college players pulled out of the draft, North Carolina State junior Sacha Killeya-Jones and TCU sophomore Kouat Noi. May 29 was the deadline for US college players to withdraw from the draft while retaining NCAA eligibility. Two other international players who are potential first-round selections also remain in the draft. ESPN and CBS have Goga Bitadze, a Georgian national who plays in Montenegro, as the 17th-ranked prospect, and ESPN has Luka Samanic, a Croatian who plays in Slovenia, listed as the 28th-ranked prospect. The NBA draft is scheduled for June 20 at Barclays Center in New York.

Grizzlies hire Bucks assistant Jenkins as head coach

The Memphis Grizzlies hired former Milwaukee Bucks assistant Taylor Jenkins as their head coach on Tuesday. The Grizzlies fired J.B. Bickerstaff at the end of the 2018-19 season. Jenkins will be introduced at a Wednesday press conference. "We are excited to welcome Taylor Jenkins to the Grizzlies organization," Grizzlies executive vice president of basketball operations Zachary Z. Kleiman said in a team-released statement. "Taylor has an excellent coaching pedigree and we are confident he will lay the groundwork of developing the young players on our roster while having the elite basketball acumen and forward-thinking positive vision to be a high-level NBA head coach." Jenkins was assistant to head coach Mike Budenholzer for the past six seasons, five with the Atlanta Hawks (2013-18) and last year with the Bucks. Jenkins becomes the third NBA coach to come directly from Budenholzer's staff, joining Utah's Quin Snyder and Brooklyn's Kenny Atkinson. Jenkins will oversee a reshaped roster in Memphis that could include dealing point guard Mike Conley. The Grizzlies hold the No. 2 pick in the 2019 draft and are expected to select Murray State point guard Ja Morant. Bickerstaff took over as the Grizzlies' interim head coach during the 2017-18 season, and he got the job full time after the team went 15-48 with him in charge. He produced a 48-97 overall record on the job, with Memphis missing the playoffs in both of his seasons.

BOTTOMLINE

Durant injury sends shock waves across free agency

AFP
Oakland, United States

When Kevin Durant fell to the court with a right Achilles injury, he sent shockwaves across the NBA, some teams having prepared for years to make him huge free agent offers in July.

Now the Golden State Warriors superstar forward is looking at a year of intense rehabilitation and another season working his way back to peak form, changing the dynamic of where dozens of top players might play next season.

Durant, who missed the past month with a right calf injury, suffered a right Achilles tendon injury in Golden State's 106-105 NBA Finals victory over Toronto on Monday, pulling the Warriors within 3-2 in the best-of-seven series.

Suddenly the landscape of decision making has changed under NBA salary cap rules, the first domino expected to fall having been Durant's choice.

Now maybe he doesn't opt out of his Warriors contract and takes \$31.5 mn to rehabilitate in familiar surroundings with teammates who see him as a "brother."

"We miss him. That's our brother," said Warriors guard Klay Thompson, himself a free agent come July.

"This is the best player in the world. With him we are really one of the greatest teams to ever play."

Or maybe he's unhappy about how he was used by the Warriors while hurt and is pushed to leave even more, having already been 2017 and 2018 NBA Finals Most Valuable Player in winning his first two league crowns.

Then there is the market of NBA clubs. Do they risk a maximum offer to an injured Durant who might never again be the same dominating player he has been?

The New York Knicks, Brooklyn Nets, Los Angeles Clippers and Los Angeles Lakers are among clubs that have made moves for years to clear cap room for this moment. But Durant's impact on the court is delayed at least a year if not longer.

Durant, who turns 31 in September, jilted Oklahoma City and star playmaker Russell Westbrook to join the Warriors after the 2016 campaign.

His fate will still impact the next teams for such stars as To-

ronto's Kawhi Leonard, who can opt out of his contract even if he leads the Raptors to the NBA crown, plus Boston's Kyrie Irving and Philadelphia's Jimmy Butler.

WAITING ON DURANT REHAB

Teams might also work harder for a deal with New Orleans for star big man Anthony Davis rather than take a Durant risk.

Durant's injury factor can impact other players also. If the Nets tried to land Durant and Irving, how would a year with Durant sidelined impact both men's desire to make the move?

Thompson and Leonard are both from Los Angeles and the Clippers could try for both. The Lakers want another star to pair with LeBron James, whose pairings with two other stars brought NBA titles in Miami and Cleveland.

As Durant hobbled out of the arena on crutches, some of the best salary cap plans of NBA clubs went with him.

Warriors basketball operations director Bob Myers, his voice breaking, offered to take the blame for playing Durant and having him incur a much worse injury than he had before, rushed back in a must-win situation in

the eyes of many. "I don't believe there's anybody to blame," Myers said. "If you have to, you can blame me. I run our basketball operations department."

'PEOPLE HAVE NO CLUE'

If Durant thinks Myers and Golden State players reach him on that personal level, it might entice him to stay and try and add a future crown with the Warriors. "It's more than basketball. But no one wants to understand that part," Warriors swingman Andre Iguodala said.

"It's so much deeper than playing basketball for money. People still don't really grasp what we're talking about. When we say this is like a real brotherhood, people have no clue what goes into that and how we feel about each other."

Durant has known the Warriors since they came to recruit him as a group in 2016 free agency.

"Life is more important in terms of caring about an individual and what they're going through," Warriors guard Stephen Curry said.

"When you get to know somebody and see how genuine they are, you root for those type of guys."



Golden State Warriors' Kevin Durant (35) walks to the locker room during the second quarter of game five of the 2019 NBA Finals against Toronto Raptors in Toronto, Canada, on Monday. (USA TODAY Sports)

MLB

Pence's home run powers Rangers past Red Sox

Right-hander Ariel Jurado pitches six quality innings

Reuters
New York

Hunter Pence hit an inside-the-park home run, and the Texas Rangers defeated the host Boston Red Sox 9-5 on Tuesday night.

Right-hander Ariel Jurado (4-2) pitched six quality innings as the Rangers won the first two games of the four-game set at Fenway Park. Jurado allowed three runs on five hits and three walks with six strikeouts.

The Rangers spoiled the first major league start for Red Sox left-hander Darwinson Hernandez (0-1).

Hernandez struggled with his control and allowed four runs (three earned) on four hits in three-plus innings. The 22-year-old, who was making his second big-league appearance, walked five and struck out seven.

Xander Bogaerts and Mookie Betts homered for the Red Sox, who have lost three in a row.

The Rangers scored in every inning between the second and sixth to take a 9-3 lead.

Rougned Odor hit an RBI ground-rule double to right field in the second to give Texas a 1-0 lead, but the Red Sox tied it in the bottom of the inning on Bogaerts' leadoff homer to centre field.

Both teams scored twice in the third, as Asdrubal Cabrera hit a two-run single in the top of the inning and the Red Sox's Rafael Devers tied it at 3-3 with a two-run triple.

The Rangers took the lead for good in the fourth on Danny Santana's sacrifice fly.

Ronald Guzman added a two-run double off the Green Monster in left field in the fifth for a 6-3 lead.

With one out in the sixth, Elvis Andrus doubled and scored when Nomar Mazara grounded a single into centre.

Pence then hit a high fly ball just inside the right field foul pole. Boston's Brock Holt lunged into the crowd in an effort to catch the ball, but it fell just over his glove. Holt thought the ball went into the stands for a home run, but it instead caromed off the base of the wall and trickled along the warning track toward the bullpens



Atlanta Braves catcher Brian McCann hits a home run against the Pittsburgh Pirates during the second inning at SunTrust Park in Atlanta, United States, on Tuesday. (USA TODAY Sports)

in right-centre field.

By the time centre fielder Betts reached the ball, which had come to a stop, Pence had scampered around the bases to make it 9-3.

The Red Sox's J.D. Martinez

hit an RBI double in the seventh. Betts homered leading off the ninth for the game's final run.

MCCANN TAKES BRAVES PAST PIRATES

Brian McCann hit two home

runs, one of them a tiebreaking, three-run shot that propelled Atlanta past visiting Pittsburgh. The game was called before the top of the ninth inning after a 1-hour, 47-minute rain delay.

McCann was one of four At-

RESULTS

NY Yankees	12-5	NY Mets
Philadelphia	7-4	Arizona
NY Mets	10-4	NY Yankees
Baltimore	4-2	Toronto
Texas	9-5	Boston
Oakland	4-3	Tampa Bay
Cleveland	2-1	Cincinnati
St. Louis	7-1	Miami
Atlanta	7-5	Pittsburgh
C White Sox	7-5	Washington
Houston	10-8	Milwaukee
Minnesota	6-5	Seattle
Kansas City	3-2	Detroit
Colorado	10-3	C Cubs
S Francisco	6-5	San Diego
LA Angels	5-3	LA Dodgers

lanta players who went deep in the second inning, but it took his second homer to break a 4-4 tie in the sixth and help the Braves to their fifth straight win. The Pirates absorbed their fifth consecutive loss.

Atlanta trailed 2-0 until breaking loose in the second inning against Chris Archer (3-6). Josh Donaldson and Nick Markakis hit back-to-back homers, and after Austin Riley struck out, McCann and Ozzie Albies went deep in consecutive at-bats. The last time Atlanta had four homers in an inning was May 28, 2003.

CLEVELAND BEAT REDS 2-1
Rookie Oscar Mercado ripped a walk-off RBI single in the 10th inning as host Cleveland posted a victory over Cincinnati.

In the 10th, Raisel Iglesias (1-6) allowed a one-out walk to Mike Freeman and a single by Leonys Martin that moved the runner to third. Francisco Lindor was intentionally walked to load the bases for Mercado, who singled to left to plate Freeman for Cleveland's first extra-inning win in four tries this year.

Carlos Santana belted a solo homer and Lindor collected a pair of doubles for the Indians, who have won five of their past seven. Brad Hand (3-2) recorded the win after striking out the side in the 10th and fanning four in two scoreless innings.

NFL ROUND-UP

Saints' Jordan lands \$52.5mn extension, according to reports



In this December 9, 2018, picture, Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Jameis Winston (left) gets sacked by New Orleans Saints defensive end Cameron Jordan during their game in Tampa, United States. (TNS)

Reuters
New York

The New Orleans Saints and defensive end Cameron Jordan reached an agreement on a three-year contract extension, multiple media outlets reported on Tuesday.

The extension will take the four-time Pro Bowl pass rusher through the 2023 season and be worth \$52.5mn — with a max value of \$55mn, including performance-based bonuses — and \$42mn in guaranteed salary, according to ESPN's Adam Schefter and NFL Network's Ian Rapoport.

Jordan, who turns 30 next month, is now under contract for five years with a max of \$74.5mn on the deal.

RAIDERS ON HARD KNOCKS
HBO and the NFL announced that the Oakland Raiders will be featured on Season 14 of Hard Knocks. HBO plans to air the series debut on August 6 at 10pm ET.

The five-episode series will have no shortage of storylines as it focuses on the Raiders, who are led by fiery head coach Jon Gruden and newly acquired superstar wide receiver Antonio Brown. Oakland is looking to bounce

back from a 4-12 season in what is expected to be its final season in the Bay Area before the franchise moves to Las Vegas.

The series likely will spend ample time on the Raiders' rookie class, which includes a trio of first-round picks: defensive tackle Clelin Ferrell out of Clemson, running back Josh Jacobs out of Alabama and safety Johnathan Abram out of Mississippi State.

JUDGE DECLARES MISTRIAL IN WINSLOW TRIAL

A judge declared a mistrial on eight remaining counts against former NFL tight end Kellen Winslow II, who was found guilty of felony rape one day earlier in Vista, California.

Winslow also was found guilty on misdemeanor charges of indecent exposure and lewd conduct. He was acquitted on another lewd-conduct charge on Monday, but the jury was deadlocked on the other eight charges, and Judge Blaine K Bowman ordered the jurors to return on Tuesday.

Shortly after 10am PT, Bowman received a note from the jurors saying they remained deadlocked on the remaining charges, which included six felonies. He then polled the jury in the courtroom. After hearing the results, he declared a mistrial on all eight counts.

MLB ROUND-UP

Ortiz 'flashed that smile' in recovery

Reuters
New York

Former Red Sox star David Ortiz is in stable condition after a second surgery in Boston, his wife Tiffany Ortiz said in a statement provided by the team.

"David arrived at Massachusetts General Hospital last night and underwent a successful second surgery. He is stable, awake, and resting comfortably this morning in the ICU where he is expected to remain for the next several days," she said.

"On behalf of me and my family, I want to thank John and Linda Henry, Tom Werner, Sam Kennedy and the Boston Red Sox for all that they are doing for David and our family, as well as Dr. Larry Ronan and the amazing staff at Massachusetts General Hospital. Lastly, I want to thank everyone for the outpouring of support and love that we have received during this incredibly difficult time. We ask for privacy as David works towards recovery."

Ortiz was alert after the surgery, which lasted until about 1am ET Tuesday, and "even flashed that smile" afterwards, media assistant Leo Lopez told ESPN. The number of visitors will be limited and Ortiz will be closely monitored for the next



In this September 22, 2013, picture, Boston Red Sox designated hitter David Ortiz celebrates his solo home in the game against Toronto Blue Jays in Boston, United States. (Reuters)

24 to 48 hours, but doctors are hopeful that he will make a full recovery.

MLB SUSPEND DONALDSON

Major League Baseball suspended Atlanta Braves third baseman Josh Donaldson one game for his actions in Monday night's contest against the Pittsburgh Pirates.

The suspension is on hold while Donaldson files an appeal. He was hit by a pitch in the bottom of the first inning by Pirates starter Joe Musgrove. They exchanged words after the inci-

dent before Donaldson shoved catcher Elias Diaz, who was trying to keep the two apart. Benches cleared but no punches were thrown.

CARDS ACTIVATE MOLINA

The St. Louis Cardinals activated catcher Yadier Molina from the 10-day injured list.

Molina, 36, missed 11 games since being sidelined with a right thumb tendon strain on May 29. The nine-time All-Star is batting .265 with four homers and 33 RBIs in 50 games.

To make room on the 25-man



Atlanta Braves third baseman Josh Donaldson (right) fights on the field with Pittsburgh Pirates catcher Elias Diaz (centre) and starting pitcher Joe Musgrove after being hit by a pitch during the game in Atlanta on Monday. (USA TODAY Sports)

roster, the Cardinals optioned rookie backstop Andrew Knizner to Triple-A Memphis.

SETBACK FOR YANKEES' BETANCES

New York Yankees reliever Del-

lin Betances will be shut down for a few weeks after suffering a setback in his rehab from a right shoulder impingement, manager Aaron Boone said.

"He's got a low-grade strain of his lat," Boone said in between a

day-night doubleheader against the New York Mets.

"I guess good news is that it is a low-level strain, but obviously frustrating, especially because the shoulder's good and he was feeling good and now a little slowdown. So we'll support him right now and hopefully a few weeks down and ramp him back him up?"

Betances, 31, is a four-time All-Star who went 4-6 with a 2.70 ERA in 66 appearances last season, mostly in a set-up role for the Yankees. The right-hander hasn't pitched this season after suffering from the shoulder problems during spring training.

COBB TO MISS REST OF THE SEASON

Baltimore Orioles right-hander Alex Cobb is scheduled to undergo hip surgery and will miss the rest of the 2019 season, general manager Mike Elias told reporters.

Cobb, 31, went 0-2 with a 10.95 ERA in three starts this season before the team shut him down because of a back strain. He is 53-52 with a 3.85 ERA in 146 career starts with the Tampa Bay Rays and Orioles.

Elias told reporters that Cobb also might undergo a procedure on his knee. The pitcher's primary surgery will be to fix an impingement in his right hip.

MARINERS REINSTATE GORDON

The Seattle Mariners reinstated second baseman Dee Gordon from the injured list.

Gordon, 31, has been out since May 21 with a right wrist contusion. He originally suffered the injury when he was struck by a pitch on May 9 against the New York Yankees.

In 45 games with the Mariners, Gordon is batting .281 with three homers, 19 RBIs and 12 steals.

BRASIER ON BEREAVEMENT/FAMILY MEDICAL EMERGENCY LIST

Boston placed relief pitcher Ryan Brasier on the bereavement/family medical emergency list and called up rookie Darwinson Hernandez from Double-A Portland to make his first career start.

Brasier is 2-3 with a 3.77 ERA with six saves in 31 appearances this season.

The right-hander must be on the bereavement/family medical emergency list for a minimum of three days but not longer than seven.

This is the third call-up of the season for the 22-year-old Hernandez, who made a relief appearance April 23 against the Detroit Tigers, throwing 2 1/3 scoreless innings. The left-hander allowed four hits, walked one and struck out four.

QATAR FINE TUNE PREPARATIONS FOR COPA AMERICA



Qatar players train at a preparatory camp in the Brazilian city of Porto Belo, near Rio de Janeiro. The squad arrived in Rio yesterday ahead of the Copa America, which will begin from tomorrow. Qatar are in Group D, along with Argentina, Paraguay and Colombia. Their first match will be against Paraguay at the Maracana on Sunday. Fleix Sanchez's men had beaten local club side Madureira 2-1 in a friendly encounter on Sunday. The Asian champions had lost to strong Brazil in a friendly.

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

Germany on course to avoid USA after tight Spain victory

Nigeria inch towards knockout stages after beating South Korea

AFP
Valenciennes, France

Germany brushed off the absence of injured star player Dzsenifer Marozsan to beat Spain 1-0 yesterday and take control of Group B in the women's World Cup, virtually assuring themselves of missing the rampant United States in the last 16.

Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Sara Daebritz earned the Germans a hard-fought three points by pouncing three minutes before the break ahead of dithering Spain defender Marta Torrejon, who only had to clear the ball after her goalkeeper Sandra Panos did well to save Alexandra Popp's header.

The win puts Martina Voss-Tecklenburg's side three points clear of Spain and one better on goal difference after narrow victories in both their group matches and means they need a point against South Africa — who play China in Paris today — on Saturday to be completely sure of topping the group.

That would leave whoever finished second below them to face the Americans, who were in ominous form on Tuesday as they racked up a record 13-0 win over Thailand, while the Germans would take one of the four best third-placed finishers who will make the last 16. Second-placed Spain, who were wasteful despite dominating possession and will rue Nahikari Garcia somehow slicing wide when clean through in the 14th minute, should still qualify but face a trickier test against the Chinese, who ran Germany close in their opening 1-0 defeat.

Earlier Nigeria coach Thomas Dennerby hailed forward Asisat Oshoala as "special" after her goal helped the Super Falcons to a 2-0 win over South Korea and took them close to qualifying for the knockout stages of the Women's World Cup for the first time in 20 years.

Oshoala struck 15 minutes from the end with a super burst and finish to seal the win after a comical own goal from Kim Do-yeon, who somehow hooked a long ball back past onrushing goalkeeper Kim Min-jung, had put Nigeria ahead in the



Spain's defender Irene Paredes (left) vies for the ball with Germany's forward Klara Buhl during the Women's World Cup Group B match at the Hainaut Stadium in Valenciennes, northern France, yesterday. (AFP)

29th minute. "She's very special because no-one has the speed she has," the Swede said the lightning quick 24-year-old after a huge win, just their second in the World Cup since 1999. "It's important for the team because you can create a chance from nothing, even a clearance can be a goalscoring opportunity!"

The victory for Dennerby's side left the unfortunate South Koreans pointless after their first two games in Group A and put Nigeria level with France and Norway

on three ahead of their crunch clash in Nice late last night.

Nigeria can now legitimately hope for a place in the last 16 regardless of what happens in their last group match against the tournament-hosting French thanks to the best third-placed teams going through. The three points they have could well be enough to see the Super Falcons through to the knockout rounds for the first time since 1999, when they reached the quarter-finals in the US.

However Dennerby is targeting a result against France in Rennes on Monday to remove all doubt. "France are a very good team, if we come out of that with one point we'll all be very happy," Dennerby added.

South Korea meanwhile face an uphill task to go through as they face a strong Norway side in their final group match next week, after watching Lee Geumin's strike ruled out for a very tight offside just before the hour mark.

FOCUS

beIN Sports to show Copa America and documentaries

beIN Sports is set to host the much-anticipated Copa America Brazil 2019 tournament live and exclusive on its channels. The action-packed event will be taking place in Brazil across five cities and six venues from the June 14 (Saturday, 15th of June, Qatar time) until the 7th of July.

For the first time in Copa America history, this edition will see AFC Asian Cup champions Qatar as the first Arab nation to compete in the tournament along with AFC Asian Cup runners-up Japan. Subscribers can benefit from the beIN summer

promotion with access to the 24 hour dedicated Copa America Brazil 2019 channels, 12 hours of exclusive documentaries on the Qatar national football team, the life of Lionel Messi, Neymar and more — as well as 60 historical matches including those of heavyweights Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay.

beIN's multi-talented presenters will host special guests and conduct exclusive interviews with Copa America Brazil 2019 dedicated studios available with both Arabic and English commentary, ensuring fans don't miss a moment of the action.

EURO 2020 QUALIFIERS

Italy edge Bosnia as Germany, France win



Italy's Marco Verratti (left) celebrates with Giorgio Chiellini after scoring against Bosnia in the Euro 2020 qualifier in Turin. (Reuters)

AFP
Paris

Italy needed a late winner from Marco Verratti to defeat a determined Bosnia-Herzegovina 2-1 in Euro 2020 qualifying on Tuesday night, while Germany and France piled up the goals in lopsided victories. Edin Dzeko fired Bosnia in front in Turin, but Lorenzo Insigne equalised shortly after half-time and Verratti curled home on 86 minutes to earn a fourth win in as many attempts for Roberto Mancini's side in Group J.

World champions France rebounded from last weekend's defeat in Turkey with a trouble-free 4-0 win away to minnows Andorra. France coach Didier Deschamps retained just four of those who began Saturday's 2-0 loss in Konya, handing first international starts to Kurt Zouma, Clement Lenglet and Leo Dubois. Kylian Mbappe opened the scoring with a chipped finish on 11 minutes, with Wissam Ben Yedder and Florian Thauvin adding to their lead in the first half. Zouma bundled home a fourth on the hour as France reclaimed top spot in Group H after Iceland beat Turkey 2-1 in Reykjavik to further sour the mood in the visiting camp.

Turkish officials had denounced the "disrespect" shown to the team when they arrived in Iceland, unhappy at being kept waiting for several hours at passport control at the airport and subjected to extensive security checks. Two headers in the first half by centre-back Ragnar Sig-

urdsson saw Iceland draw level on nine points with France as well as Turkey, for whom Dorukhan Tokoz scored a consolation.

Germany made light work of Estonia as Serge Gnabry and Marco Reus fired them to a thundering 8-0 victory in Mainz. Gnabry and Reus scored two goals each, with Leon Goretzka, Ilkay Gundogan, Timo Werner and Leroy Sane also on target, as Germany ran riot to seal a third win from three games in Group C.

Underdogs Estonia were helpless against a bright young German side who now appear to have left last year's World Cup woes far behind them. Joachim Loew's team are still playing catch-up to Northern Ireland after Paddy McNair struck four minutes from the end in a 1-0 victory in Belarus.

Belgium extended their perfect start to Group I with a 3-0 defeat of Scotland in Brussels. Romelu Lukaku headed in an Eden Hazard cross on the stroke of half-time and bagged a second early in the second half, with Kevin De Bruyne thumping home another at the death.

Russia followed up their 9-0 trouncing of San Marino with a much nervier win over Cyprus that came courtesy of a single goal by Aleksei Ionov. Ryan Giggs's Wales suffered back-to-back losses as Mate Patkai struck 10 minutes from time to earn Hungary a 1-0 victory in Budapest. The Hungarians, the only side to have played four games in Group E, are top on nine points, three clear of Slovakia, who were 5-1 winners in Azerbaijan.

SPOTLIGHT

US face backlash over biggest women's World Cup win

AFP
Paris

Holders the United States began their defence of the women's World Cup by crushing Thailand 13-0 but their joyous celebrations of the tournament's record win triggered a backlash yesterday. The US team scored 10 goals in the second half in Reims on Tuesday as they bettered Germany's 11-0 win over Argentina in 2007 and shattered their own previous tournament best of 7-0.

American star Alex Morgan grabbed

five goals while Rose Lavelle and Samantha Mewis netted twice each and Lindsey Horan, Megan Rapinoe, Mallory Pugh and Carli Lloyd also got on the scoresheet in the Group F encounter watched by more than 18,000. But the Americans' wild goal celebrations in such a one-sided game were not to everyone's taste. Former Canadian international player Kaylyn Kyle, working as an analyst for Canada's TSN at the tournament, said on air: "As a Canadian we would just never ever think of doing something like that... For me it's disrespectful, it's disgraceful."

Kyle said later on social media she had received death threats for her comments,

but repeated that she felt the Americans' celebrations were "excessive and disrespectful". Many Twitter users also criticised the show of joy with the hashtag "UglyAmericans". "A classless winner is worse than a sore loser, regardless of gender," said one tweet. USA Today columnist Nancy Armour was unapologetic. "Take the pearl clutching and righteous indignation somewhere else. This is the World Cup, not a rec league tournament," she wrote. USA coach Jill Ellis hit back at suggestions her players could have eased up and spared 34th-ranked Thailand complete humiliation.

"This is a world championship so every

team that is here has been fantastic to get to this point. To be respectful to opponents is to play hard against opponents," Ellis said. Captain Megan Rapinoe said her team had been overjoyed at setting the record score but insisted they did respect all their opponents. "We always want to have any world record and anything we can get over the Germans, we'll take it," Rapinoe said. "Obviously we have the utmost respect for everyone we play, but it's the World Cup."

Thailand's deflated coach Nuengruethai Sathongwien said she had no excuses, adding: "We accept that they are better."

GOLF

Woods and Koepka ready for classic US Open test

'There's nothing like playing a US Open set up at Pebble Beach. It's a special place'

AFP
Pebble Beach, United States

The 119th US Open at Pebble Beach has the makings of a classic as Tiger Woods returns to the scene of a signature triumph to take on a new generation of stars led by two-time defending champion Brooks Koepka.

Koepka, 29, has a chance to do what only one golfer has done before him – win a third straight US Open title. It's been more than 100 years since Willie Anderson accomplished the feat, and Koepka says there's no better place to chase history than Pebble Beach, where five prior editions have produced enduring major championship memories.

"It's just such a special place," Koepka said of the scenic course hugging the Pacific coast. "Just the history behind it. You look at the guys that have won here at Pebble, some of the greatest players that have ever played the game."

Jack Nicklaus won the first US Open staged at Pebble Beach in 1972. Ten years later it was Tom Watson and in 1992 Tom Kite. Woods triumphed in 2000 by a crushing 15 strokes – still a major championship record – and Graeme McDowell ended Europe's 40-year US Open drought when he was the last man standing with a classic US Open total of even par 284 in 2010.

Koepka knows history is against his bid for a treble. "I know the odds are stacked up probably even more against me now to go three in a row than to back it up," Koepka said, noting that "It's hard to win the same event three times in a row."

The last player to win the same major three years in a row was Peter Thomson at the British Open from 1954-56. The last player to win a PGA Tour event three straight years was Steve Stricker at the John Deere Classic in 2009, '10 and '11.

Woods won the same tournament at least three straight years six times in five tournaments, so it's perhaps no wonder he returns to Pebble 19 years after his 2000 triumph in the title mix. Having cemented his return from the injury wilderness with his 15th major title at the Masters, Woods says he's "trending in the right direction".

The same can be said of three-time major winner Jordan Spieth, who struggled to 11 straight finishes outside the top 10 to start the season but has posted three straight top 10s coming into the third major of the season. Dustin Johnson, who pushed Koepka late before settling for second behind the American at the PGA Championship last month, also features among the contenders, and Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy arrives off an imperious seven-stroke victory at the Canadian Open.

Five-time major winner Phil Mickelson, who turns 49 on Sunday, reckons Pebble Beach offers one of his last legitimate chances to finally capture the US Open – the only major to elude him, while American Rickie Fowler again seeks



Tiger Woods of the United States speaks at a press conference prior to the US Open in Pebble Beach, California. (AFP)

TOKYO OR BUST AS TIGER EYES OLYMPIC DREAM

Pebble Beach, United States: Tiger Woods is setting his sights on next year's Olympic games, driven on by the knowledge that he may not get many more chances to add a gold medal to his bulging trophy cabinet.

The 43-year-old former world number one is hunting a 16th major at this week's US Open at Pebble Beach, two months after crowning his comeback from injury with victory at the Masters.

But Woods acknowledged on Tuesday that he is excited by the possibility of challenging for Olympic honours at Tokyo 2020, where golf will be a medal sport once more after a successful re-

turn in 2016. "Olympic gold medal would be a hell of a feat," Woods said. "First I need to qualify. It would be exciting if I got a chance to represent the United States in the Olympic Games."

Woods was battling back injuries at the time of the 2016 games in Rio de Janeiro, and was never in contention for earning an Olympic berth.

For the 2020 Olympics, qualification will be based on the world rankings, with the top 15 players in the rankings assured of a berth, with a limit of four golfers per country.

A total of 60 players will play in the men's event. On current standings,

world number five Woods would claim one of the four USA spots as the third highest ranked American player.

Woods, who has to carefully manage his fitness and playing load following multiple back surgeries, said Tokyo may be his best realistic chance of playing in an Olympics. He would be 48 by the time of the 2024 Olympics in Paris.

"I don't know how many more times I get a run at it," Woods said. "Next time I'll be 48. I don't have that many chances of playing for the United States in the Olympics. So it will certainly be an honour if I were able to represent the United States."

he expected to see something different from the benign face Pebble presented during early practice rounds. "You just know that's not going to be the way it's going to be come Friday, come Saturday this week," McDowell said.

"And it looks like they have the golf course right where they want it right now – which is exciting.

As the course dries out, McDowell said

US Open set up at Pebble Beach," Woods said.

"The golf course is not overly long. It's not big in that regard, but man, it's tricky. The greens are all slanted, very small targets," he said, noting that staying below the hole would be crucial on the greens with a tendency toward bumpiness.

As the course dries out, McDowell said

AFP
Roanne, France

Chris Froome will miss the Tour de France after hitting a wall at high speed and suffering severe injuries in a training accident at the Criterium du Dauphine yesterday, Team Ineos leader Dave Brailsford has confirmed. "It's clear he'll take no part in the Tour," Brailsford told French television while four time Tour de France winner Froome was being treated at the scene in a parked ambulance. This year's Tour de France embarks from Brussels on July 6 and the loss of the iconic British rider will shake up ambitions at several teams.

But Froome's team principal Brailsford's sombre tone suggested the implications may go further. "He is in a very, very serious condition," said Brailsford, adding that the racer was having difficulty speaking and would be helicoptered to hospital.

A witness at the scene of the accident said Froome had suffered an open fracture of the femur and had suffered

other injuries too, notably to his elbows. Brailsford said Froome had been speeding downhill with Dutch teammate Wout Poels on a 'recon' ride for yesterday's time-trial when a gust of wind blew him off track and into a wall.

"They were going very fast and the wind got his front wheel and sent him straight into the wall," Brailsford said in French. The accident took place on a narrow descent through the village of Saint-André d'Apchon in the Loire region and other competitors on the recon estimated he would have been travelling at 60km/h (38mp/h). "He could hardly speak. He'll be helicoptered to either Lyon or Saint-Etienne hospital within a few minutes," said Brailsford.

Tour de France director Christian Prudhomme was swift to wish Froome a speedy recovery. "We hope he gets well soon. The Tour de France won't be the same without him. Chris Froome has been the central character at the Tour since 2013," he said. "His withdrawal changes the whole thing. Even if they have the title holder Geraint Thomas and let's not be lured into underestimating Egan Bernal, who will be

his lieutenant or possibly more." Prudhomme said of two key Ineos riders.

French climber Romain Bardet, who came second to Froome on the 2016 Tour de France, described the news of the extent of his fellow rider's injuries as awful. "I didn't realise it was that serious," Bardet said when told after the time-trial won by Wout van Aert. "That's dreadful. It's never nice when one of your rivals gets unlucky like that."

Froome's last major win came at the 2018 Giro where he also fell while doing recon for the opening day time-trial around Jerusalem, suffering early in the three week race before a spectacular late rally. He also fell on stage one of the 2018 Tour de France where he eventually came third behind Thomas and Dutch all rounder Tom Dumoulin.

This year has been disappointing for Froome. Early in the 2019 season he took part in the Tour of Colombia, but the rarefied air at altitude and the long climbs failed to suit him and he came 91st in the run through the Andes.

He was 94th at the Tour of Catalonia, 11th in the Tour of the Alps and 13th at the Tour de Yorkshire, leaving critics lukewarm over his 2019 Tour

de France chances. The Kenyan born Froome, who at his best combines top level time-trialing skills with a fearless prowess for climbing, first won the Tour in 2013 with Team Sky.

He went on to further Tour de France wins in 2015, 2016 and 2017, he also won the 2017 Vuelta a Espana and the 2018 Giro d'Italia, making him the greatest Grand Tour rider of his generation.

CRITERIUM DU DAUPHINE

STAGE 4 RESULTS

1. Wout Van Aert (BEL/JUM) 33min 38sec.
2. Tejay Van Garderen (USA/EFI) 4:31sec.
3. Tom Dumoulin (NED/SUN) 47.4. Steven Kruijswijk (NED/JUM) 49.5. Emanuel Buchmann (GER/BOR) 51.6. Adam Yates (GBR/MIT) 56.7. Julian Alaphilippe (FRA/DEC) 59.8. Nils Politt (GER/KAT) 1:05.9. Jakob Fuglsang (DEN/AST) 1:07.10. Remi Cavagna (FRA/DEC) 1:10

OVERALL STANDINGS:

1. Adam Yates (GBR/Mitchelton) 12hr 27min 26sec. 2. Dylan Teuns (BEL/BAH) at 4sec. 3. Tejay Van Garderen (USA/EFI) 6. 4. Jakob Fuglsang (DEN/AST) 7. 5.

FOCUS

'Underachieving' Day turns to caddie Williams

AFP
Pebble Beach, United States

Jason Day, a former world number one, major winner and 12-time winner on the PGA Tour, is hoping Tiger Woods' former caddie Steve Williams can help him reignite a career in which he believes he has "severely underachieved."

"I think I've underachieved up until now," the 31-year-old Aussie said Tuesday as he prepared for the US Open at Pebble Beach. "I feel I've got a game that when it's on, I can win most tournaments. And the big thing for me is to go ahead and believe that, and have trust in my abilities that I can do that."

Day, whose current ranking of 16th in the world is his lowest since November of 2013, is also trusting that Williams can help him with his quest. Williams was on the bag for 13 of Woods' 15 major victories, including his epic 15-shot victory at the US Open at Pebble Beach in 2000. "To have someone like Steve on the bag is very instrumental in my career

with regards to where I want to go and the trajectory I want," Day said. "My goal is to get back to number one in the world."

Day has five top-10 finishes this season, including a tie for fifth at the Masters. But he missed the cut at the Memorial last month and said he's "very disappointed with how this year has progressed."

At the urging of his wife, Ellie, and his professional team, Day said he would be "more selfish" with his time. "I need to start working harder, that's plain simple," Day said. He added that it was "a little bit intimidating" to have Williams on his bag.

In addition to working for Woods, Williams was on the bag for Adam Scott when the Aussie won the Masters. "He's had a lot of great ball-strikers that he's worked for," Day said. "I was excited and intimidated in the same breath." Day, who won his only major title to date at the 2015 PGA Championship, claimed eight US PGA Tour titles in 2015 and 2016. He didn't win again until 2018, when he claimed two titles, but he has since stalled again.

BOXING

Joshua is 'finished', says Tyson Fury

AFP
London

Tyson Fury believes former world champion Anthony Joshua is "finished" after the British heavyweight's shock defeat to Andy Ruiz Jr in New York. Joshua lost his IBF, WBA and WBO titles on June 1 in one of the biggest upsets in the history of the division.

After the fight, Fury sent a message on Twitter that urged his fellow Briton to "rest up, recover, regroup and come again". But this week he told BBC Sport: "When a man doesn't want to be there once, he will always do it and it's hard to come back from. It's been done many different times by many different fighters. He did it that night and I don't think he will come back from it. Finished. Ask any top trainer who has been around the sport a lifetime. When he got to the ring I saw he didn't want to be there."

Joshua, 29, whose defeat against Ruiz was the first of his career, had previously made Fury an offer to fight. "Everybody thought that man could beat me," said Fury. "In what world could he ever beat me? What were people seeing? I don't know what people were looking at as I don't know in what world he could have beaten me."

Joshua's seventh-round stoppage by Ruiz came as a huge surprise as his opponent had been given barely one month's notice for the fight and weighed in at more than 20 pounds (nine kilograms) heavier than the Briton.

But unbeaten Fury, who shed around 10 stone (64 kilograms) in a bid to re-establish himself in the heavyweight division after a battle with mental health and drugs issues, said body shape was no indicator of suc-

cess. "Physically Joshua could out-train everyone," said the 30-year-old, who is preparing to fight Germany's Tom Schwarz in Las Vegas on Saturday.

"He would break every heart monitor, has probably worn out every treadmill in the gym, smashes the bag, it's all very unimportant. Boxing isn't rocket science and today people are trying to make it a scientist thing. If you can fight you can fight, if you can't you can forget about it."

World Boxing Council heavyweight world champion Deontay Wilder said last month that he had lined up a highly anticipated rematch with Fury, to take place after Wilder's rematch with Luis Ortiz, which will reportedly take place in September.

Wilder and Fury fought to a draw in Los Angeles in December after an epic 12-round battle at the Staples Center. "If I was a match-fit fighter and some fat man comes off drugs and alcohol and done that to me I'd never look at the sport again," said Fury. "Does Deontay Wilder have anything to bother me? Nothing at all. I've been hurt 1,000 times but Wilder didn't hurt me once."



CYCLING

'Very seriously' injured Froome out of Tour de France



Rescue workers on the roof of the Centre Hospitalier of Roanne attend to Team Ineos rider Christopher Froome as he boards a helicopter to be transferred to another hospital, after he fell on a training run ahead of the fourth stage of the 71st edition of the Criterium du Dauphine cycling race, in Roanne. (AFP)