

ENERTECH QATAR
SAFETY TRAINING CENTRE

Qatar's Largest International Qualifications & Awards Provider

www.enertechqatar.com

P +974 4401 0888 F+974 4401 0889

E sales@enertechqatar.com / admin@enertechqatar.com



BOXING | Page 4

Joshua takes shock title defeat to Ruiz on the chin



MLB | Page 5

Newcomer Bruce homers twice in Phils' win over Padres

ALZAMAN
EXCHANGE W.L.L.

Your Global Remittance Partner

MAIN BRANCH | LULU HYPER | SANAYYA | ALKHOR

MATAR QADEEM | MANSOURA | ABU HAMOUR | BIN OMRAN

alzmanexchange | www.alzmanexchange.com | L4441448

Thursday, June 6, 2019
Shawwal 3, 1440 AH

GULF TIMES

SPORT

Resurgent Dutch threaten to keep England waiting

Page 7

FOOTBALL

CRICKET

Sharma ton guides India to opening World Cup win

Indian opener leads the run chase with an unbeaten knock after Chahal and Bumrah restrict Proteas to a modest 227

AFP
Southampton, United Kingdom

Rohit Sharma hit an unbeaten century as India made a comfortable start to their World Cup campaign with a six-wicket win over South Africa in Southampton yesterday that dealt a fresh blow to the Proteas' tournament hopes.

Chasing a modest 228, India cruised to victory on the back of Sharma's 122 not out as they won with 15 balls to spare and live up to their tag as one of the favourites for the showpiece event.

For South Africa, a third straight defeat in as many matches this World Cup left their hopes of qualifying for the semi-finals on a knife edge.

Fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah and leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal laid the platform for victory as India restricted an injury-hit South Africa to 227 for nine in 50 overs.

Chahal returned figures of 4-51 after Bumrah did the early damage by dismissing both South Africa openers.

Sharma, who survived a dropped catch on one by South Africa captain Faf du Plessis at second slip, then anchored India's chase in measured fashion.

'GOT THE JOB DONE'

"I couldn't play my natural game, you have to see what the ball was doing, certain shots I love to play I had to cut down and try to leave as many balls as possible," said Sharma of his relatively sedate 144-ball knock.

"It was overcast...I had to play out the overs and make sure I got the job done."

South Africa quick Kagiso Rabada struck early with the wicket



India's Rohit Sharma (right) plays a shot as South African wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock looks on during the 2019 ICC Cricket World Cup match at The Ageas Bowl in Southampton, Britain, yesterday. (Reuters)

of Shikhar Dhawan for eight but his team was short on runs to put pressure on the opposition batting.

Wicket-keeper Quinton de

Kock came up with a stunning catch behind the stumps to send back India skipper Virat Kohli for 18 off Andile Phehlukwayo — the first time in three World Cups the

star batsman had not started the tournament with a hundred.

Sharma kept the chase on course, building partnerships that included an 85-run third-

wicket stand with KL Rahul, who made 26.

The opener's well-judged mix of caution and aggression saw him reach his 23rd one-day

Scorecard

SOUTH AFRICA		6-0-31-0; Yadav 10-0-46-1 (1w); Chahal 10-0-51-4 (3w); Jadhav 4-0-16-0	
H. Amla c Sharma b Bumrah	6		
Q. de Kock c Kohli b Bumrah	10		
F. du Plessis b Chahal	38		
R. van der Dussen b Chahal	22		
D. Miller c and b Chahal	31		
JP Duminy lbw b Yadav	3		
A. Phehlukwayo st Dhoni b Chahal	34		
C. Morris c Kohli b Kumar	42		
K. Rabada not out	31		
I. Tahir c Jadhav b Kumar	0		
Extras	(b1, lb3, w6)	10	
Total	(nine wickets, 50 overs)	227	
Fall of wickets:	1-11 (Amla), 2-24 (De Kock), 3-78 (Van der Dussen), 4-80 (Du Plessis), 5-89 (Duminy), 6-135 (Miller), 7-158 (Phehlukwayo), 8-224 (Morris), 9-227 (Tahir)		
Bowling:	Kumar 10-0-44-2 (2w); Bumrah 10-1-35-2; Pandya		
INDIA		S. Dhawan c de Kock b Rabada 8	
R. Sharma not out	122		
V. Kohli c de Kock b Phehlukwayo	18		
KL Rahul c du Plessis b Rabada	26		
MS Dhoni c and b Morris	34		
H. Pandya not out	15		
Extras	(lb3, w4)	7	
Total	(four wickets, 47.3 overs)	230	
Fall of wickets:	1-12 (Dhawan), 2-54 (Kohli), 3-139 (Rahul), 4-213 (Dhoni)		
Bowling:	Tahir 10-0-58-0; Rabada 10-1-39-2 (1w); Morris 10-3-36-1 (1w); Phehlukwayo 8.3-0-40-1 (1w); Shamsi 9-0-54-0 (1w)		
RESULT:	India won by six wickets		

century with a single off Tabraiz Shamsi, with Sharma hitting 13 fours and two sixes in total.

Sharma survived another reprieve on 107 after David Miller dropped a high but routine chance at cover to sum up South Africa's sorry performance so far before Chris Morris held a consolation caught and bowled chance, despite treading on the stumps at his end, to dismiss MS Dhoni (34).

BUMRAH STRIKES

Earlier, Bumrah, the world's top-ranked ODI bowler, had the ball darting around on a cloudy morning, openers Hashim Amla (six) and de Kock (10) both falling to slip catches off his bowling. Chahal soon took charge as he

bowed Rassie van der Dussen for 22 with the first ball of his second over to end a 54-run third-wicket partnership.

He then bowled skipper Du Plessis for 38 later in the same over.

Morris, batting at No 8, provided late spark with his fighting 42 during an eighth-wicket partnership of 66 with Rabada, who made an unbeaten 31 — his highest ODI score.

South Africa have been hit by a spate of injuries, with pace spearhead Dale Steyn making an early exit from the tournament without playing a game.

India next play Australia at the Oval on Sunday while South Africa take on West Indies on Monday.

FOOTBALL

Infantino waved in for second term as FIFA president

AFP
Paris

Gianni Infantino said yesterday he had turned FIFA into an organisation "synonymous with credibility" as he was re-elected for a second term as president of world football's governing body.

It was a formality that the 49-year-old would be waved through for a new four-year mandate, until 2023, as he stood unopposed at the FIFA Congress in Paris.

The FIFA Council chose to back his re-election by acclamation, with Infantino now hoping to build on the work he started in February 2016, when he was voted in to succeed the disgraced Sepp Blatter at the head of the organisation.

Eager to "open up" and "globalise" the game, he will now push ahead with already approved plans to expand the Club World Cup to 24 teams, and with his ambition of expanding the World Cup itself to 48 teams.

As he addressed the 211 members of the Congress in the French capital, where the Women's World Cup begins on Friday, Infantino claimed credit for

the success of the 2018 men's World Cup in Russia, the "transparent" bidding process for the 2026 tournament in North America, and the introduction of Video Assistant Referees into the game.

He said he was now at the head of "a new FIFA, an organisation that is synonymous with credibility, confidence, integrity."

"Today nobody talks about crises, nobody talks about rebuilding FIFA from scratch, nobody talks about scandals, nobody talks about corruption. We talk about football," insisted the Swiss-Italian lawyer, formerly secretary general of European governing body UEFA.

"The very least we can say is that we have turned the situation around.

NO LONGER 'TOXIC'

"In three years and four months, this organisation went from being toxic, almost criminal, to being what it should be, an organisation that develops football, an organisation that cares about football."

Infantino has overseen a major increase in FIFA's income, with cash reserves increasing to a record \$2.75bn over his first term. FIFA announced

record revenue for the three years to 2018, of \$6.4bn.

"FIFA has today also the most solid financial situation ever and is coming out of the period of its worst crisis," he said.

Infantino previously worked closely with Michel Platini, but the suspended ex-head of UEFA this week attacked the FIFA chief, saying he had "no legitimacy" and accusing him of having mocked women's football.

However, Infantino pointed to the appointment of Senegal's Fatma Samoura as Secretary General and to the fact that women now made up 20 percent of all those involved in FIFA committees as he defended his work done in that area.

"It is only 20 percent, but before it was four percent. We need to be better, we will be, but we start, we move, we progress," he said.

"At the Women's World Cup in France this year we will have the explosion of women's football," he added.

That tournament will begin tomorrow when hosts France play South Korea in Paris, and will run until July 7.

The next FIFA Congress will be held in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa in May next year.



FIFA President Gianni Infantino poses for a picture after being re-elected by acclamation for a second term at the 69th FIFA Congress in Paris, France, yesterday. (AFP)



SUPPORT SYSTEM

Asif thanks family for World Cup chance after daughter's death

AFP
Bristol, United Kingdom

Pakistan batsman Asif Ali has credited his family for convincing him to play at the World Cup after the tragic death of his infant daughter last month.

The 27-year-old had to leave Britain after the fifth one-day international against England when he learned of the death of his 19-month-old daughter Dua Fatima from cancer in the United States.

Asif, who was not in the preliminary squad for the World Cup, forced his way into the final 15 with two half centuries against

England during the recent series between the two countries.

Asif said his wife and family helped him deal with his daughter's illness.

"I was informed of my daughter's health during the Pakistan Super League in February," Asif said.

"It was shocking and heart-breaking but my family stood by me in those difficult times and they eased it by convincing me that I should play for the country and they will take care of her.

"They told me 'don't waste a chance of playing for the country' because only lucky ones get that chance. Whatever Allah did, it was for her betterment."

The son of an ironsmith in Pa-

kistan's industrial city of Faisalabad, Asif was spotted as a hard-hitting batsman by former Pakistan skipper Misbah-ul-Haq.

His role is to give impetus to an innings towards the end.

"If I score runs in the team's performance then it's good for all of us," he said. "I am not worried because what role I am given I will play according to the conditions."

Asif said he was happy to score runs in the recent series against England despite a 4-0 defeat for Pakistan.

"I need to score quick runs in the final overs and you may have seen my game during the series where I got more overs to bat," he said.

"I got 20-25 overs and that's why I scored two fifties. If you bat up the order then it's relatively easy to hit out as you get settled."

Asif hopes Pakistan will carry forward the momentum of their victory against World Cup hosts England in Nottingham on Monday.

"Beating England was awesome," said Asif of Pakistan's 14-run win, which followed a seven-wicket mauling at the hands of the West Indies in their first match, also in Nottingham.

"England have a strong batting line-up, so the win was very good. We now have the momentum and we will take it with us in the next games."



REPORT

NZ hold nerve to beat Bangladesh in thriller

Chasing 245, Taylor and Williamson put the Black Caps on course for two-wicket win



New Zealand's Ross Taylor plays a shot during the 2019 ICC Cricket World Cup match against Bangladesh at The Oval in London yesterday. (AFP)

Reuters
London

New Zealand held their nerve under the floodlights to beat Bangladesh by two wickets in a dramatic low-scoring Cricket World Cup match at The Oval yesterday.

Chasing a modest target of 245, Ross Taylor and Kane Williamson shared a third-wicket partnership of 105 to put the Black Caps on course for a comfortable victory, but they lost six more wickets before notching up their sec-

ond win of the tournament with 17 balls to spare.

Williamson should have been run out for eight but Bangladesh wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim dislodged the bails with his arm to waste the chance and the New Zealand captain went on to make 40.

Tom Latham was out cheaply and when Taylor was caught by Mushfiqur for 82 Bangladesh scored a famous win.

Colin de Grandhomme, Jimmy Neesham and Matt Henry also fell as the pressure mounted but Mitchell Santner and Lockie Ferguson stayed calm to edge New Zealand over the line.

Earlier Paceman Matt Henry grabbed four wickets as New Zealand bowled Bangladesh out for 244.

Henry finished with figures of 4-47 to follow his three wickets against Sri Lanka as Bangladesh sent in to bat - lost their last six wickets for just 65 runs.

Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan hit a fighting 68-ball 64 with seven boundaries in his 200th one-day international but no other batsmen cashed in on good starts.

Once Shakib was caught by wicketkeeper Tom Latham off the bowling of Colin de Grandhom-

Scorecard	
BANGLADESH	NEW ZEALAND
T. Iqbal c Boult b Ferguson 24	M. Guptill c Iqbal b Shakib 25
S. Sarkar b Henry 25	C. Munro c Hasan b Shakib 24
S. Al Hasan c Latham b De Grandhomme 64	K. Williamson c Hossain b Hasan 40
M. Rahim run out 19	R. Taylor c Rahim b Hossain 82
M. Mithun c De Grandhomme b Henry 26	T. Latham c Saifuddin b Hasan 0
Mahmudullah c Williamson b Santner 20	J. Neesham c Sarkar b Hossain 25
M. Hossain c Guptill b Boult 11	C. de Grandhomme c Rahim b Saifuddin 15
M. Saifuddin b Henry 29	M. Santner not out 17
M. Hasan c Latham b Boult 7	M. Henry b Saifuddin 6
M. Mortaza c Boult b Henry 1	L. Ferguson not out 4
M. Rahman not out 0	Extras (nb 1, w 9) 10
Extras (b1, lb8, w9) 18	Total (8 wks, 471 overs) 248
Total (all out, 492 overs) 244	Fall of wickets: 1-35 (Guptill), 2-55 (Munro), 3-160 (Williamson), 4-162 (Latham), 5-191 (Taylor), 6-218 (De Grandhomme), 7-218 (Neesham), 8-238 (Henry)
Bowling: Henry 9.2-0-47-4 (1w), Boult 10-0-44-2 (1w), Ferguson 10-0-40-1 (5w), De Grandhomme 8-0-39-1 (1w), Neesham 2-0-24-0 (1w), Santner 10-1-41-1	Bowling: Mortaza 5-0-32-0 (1nb), Hasan 10-0-47-2 (1w), Rahman 7-1-0-48-0 (3w), Shakib 10-0-47-2 (1w), Saifuddin 7-0-41-2 (3w), Hossain 8-0-33-2 (1w)
	RESULT: New Zealand won by two wickets

me in the 31st over, the innings fell apart. Mohamed Mithun (26), Mahmudullah (20) and Mosadeek Hossain (11) all failed to build a significant innings.

Tailender Mohamed Saifuddin hit a 23-ball 29 with a six and three boundaries before Henry and Trent Boult (2-44) mopped up the tail.

Earlier, openers Tamim Iqbal, who made 24, and Soumya Sarkar, who scored 25, gave Bangladesh a solid base, putting on 45 runs for the first wicket.

But Henry made the breakthrough for New Zealand, bowling Sarkar in the ninth over.

That brought Shakib to the crease, much to the appreciation of a large contingent of Bangladeshi supporters.

Iqbal was out shortly afterwards, caught by Boult off the bowling of Lockie Ferguson, to leave Bangladesh 60-2.

Mushfiqur Rahim rebuilt the innings with Shakib, putting on exactly 50 for the third wicket before he was run out for 19.

FOCUS

Woakes backs England to bounce back from Pakistan defeat

Reuters
London

England's narrow defeat by Pakistan in their second World Cup match was by no means a 'car crash' and the hosts are determined to bounce back quickly from the disappointment, fast bowler Chris Woakes has said.

England thumped South Africa in their World Cup opener but fell 14 runs short of Pakistan in their second game of the tournament at Trent Bridge on Monday.

Woakes, who took three wickets against Pakistan but also conceded 71 runs in his eight overs, added that England were probably better off for getting their first defeat of the tournament out of the way early.

"You probably want to lose one earlier rather than later," he told reporters. "You don't want to produce a performance like we did against Pakistan in a more high-pressure game, maybe a must-win or something."

"The good thing about this group is that when we've had a bad performance or lost a game of cricket, we bounce back very well." England next face Bangladesh in Cardiff on Saturday and Woakes said the squad would try and put a stop to the fielding errors that had cost them against Pakistan.

"Against South Africa we put in an unbelievable fielding performance," the 30-year-old added. "We know that's our standard, so whenever you drop below that you're always going to be a little bit disappointed."

"Fielding creates momentum for a team - if you're fielding well, constantly taking diving stops, stopping those twos and putting the batsman under pressure then it makes a difference."

"I don't think it was a car crash by any means, we just left a few out there. We'll get back on the practice field, put in a hard shift and try and practice some of the things we didn't get quite right."



BOTTOMLINE

Vaughan laments empty seats at World Cup



India's Jasprit Bumrah (right) in action during the World Cup match against South Africa in Southampton, Britain, yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP
Southampton, United Kingdom

Former England captain Michael Vaughan bemoaned the number of empty seats at the World Cup match between India and South Africa at Southampton yesterday, adding his voice to criticism of the tournament's ticketing arrangements.

There were several banks of unfilled seats when play started at 10:30am local time (0930 GMT) with India, one of the best-supported teams in world cricket, in the field.

"Such a shame there are so many empty seats," said Vaughan, commenting for BBC Radio. "They keep saying it's sold out but where are the tickets?"

The crowd swelled when India captain Virat Kohli, arguably the biggest star in the game, was batting, but there were still noticeable gaps in the stands.

Claire Furlong, the International Cricket Council's general manager of communications,

told AFP that the match had drawn a capacity crowd of more than 17,000.

Furlong pointed to the long queues for food outlets and other attractions on the concourses behind the stands as one reason why not every seat was taken.

The length of cricket matches mean it is not uncommon for spectators to be out of their seats even when play is in progress.

"The match is a 17,200 sell-out. We haven't had a turnstile count yet but all day there have been a couple of thousand milling around the concourses," Furlong said.

"We will conduct an evaluation to see if there are any trends and whether we need to communicate more about start times," she added.

"We provide a re-sale platform for tickets so that fans who've missed out can buy them without being ripped off by secondary re-sale sites."

"But if people who've bought tickets don't turn up, there's only so much we can do."

The World Cup is the ICC's

showpiece event and officials have already come under fire during this tournament regarding empty seats during Pakistan's surprise 14-run victory over hosts England at Trent Bridge on Monday.

Some fans vented their anger on social media about what they said was a failure by corporate ticket-holders to take up their places.

The Nottingham ground had already experienced ticketing issues of a different kind when thousands of fans queued for hours to get in to watch last week's match between Pakistan and the West Indies.

A combination of late sales and people needing to collect tickets at Trent Bridge led to "1,600, 1,700 people standing in a queue," according to tournament director Steve Elworthy.

The problem was compounded by the fact Pakistan collapsed to 105 all out.

Many fans missed their innings completely and the situation prompted the ICC to offer full refunds and look again at their ticketing policies.



FOCUS

Australia captain Finch wary of West Indies' threat

'Those first 10-over periods are going to be really crucial because we know how damaging the West Indies can be'

Agencies
Nottingham, United Kingdom

Australia captain Aaron Finch expects his side to face a "very dangerous" West Indies when the teams meet in a mouthwatering World Cup clash at Trent Bridge today.

Reigning champions Australia started their title defence with a seven-wicket stroll against Afghanistan, while the West Indies' fast bowlers were especially impressive in skittling out Pakistan for just 105 on the way to a comfortable win at Trent Bridge.

West Indies, with veteran opener Chris Gayle leading the way, have the run-scoring power to give an Australia side strong in both batting and bowling a run for their money.

"I think when you come up against someone as dangerous as Chris, you have to be prepared, like I said before, that he's going to hit boundaries," Finch told reporters at Trent Bridge yesterday. "So I think it's important that you come prepared to take the contest to him because he definitely does that the other way."

"They're a very dangerous side and I think that whichever team comes out and executes it from the start of the game, I think it's important that you start really well, whether you bat or bowl first."

"Those first 10-over periods are going to be really crucial because we know how damaging the West Indies can be during that period."

The opening batsman added: "But equally, if we get off to a good start then we can start to try to get into our work a bit. I think if we're tentative and a bit stand-offish and wait for things to happen, that's when they can dominate you from the start."

Both teams have won their opening games and are looking to build momentum in their second game at Trent Bridge, a venue which saw the highest one-day international score of 481 runs racked up last year when England beat Australia.

"I think just before we turned



Australia's captain Aaron Finch (right) faces Australia's head coach Justin Langer in the nets during a training session at Trent Bridge in Nottingham, England, yesterday. (AFP)

up to the training yesterday (Tuesday), a few boys talked about their previous experiences here, which obviously haven't been overly pleasant," Finch admitted.

"But we're in the home change rooms, which is a first for everyone, which is nice."

Finch said the key to beating a resurgent West Indies is to have various strategies on hand to counter bowling attacks as teams could adjust very quickly in the tournament.

"I think if you just stick to one plan, then teams get on top of you pretty quickly or they adjust quick enough," Finch said.

"I think if you over-attack and continue to go too short or you continue to go too full, whatever it might be, it's about your follow-ups from them balls."

Australia are chasing a record sixth World Cup win in the 50-over edition of the game having won the previous one in 2015. However, Finch warned against complacency.

Windies captain Holder plays down Australia rivalry

Reuters
Nottingham, United Kingdom

West Indies captain Jason Holder is playing down his team's traditional rivalry with Australia ahead of the Cricket World Cup match between the sides at Trent Bridge today.

West Indies beat Australia in the first World Cup final in 1975 and although the fortunes of the once all-conquering Caribbean team have declined, the history between the sides should ensure a compelling game.

"It's always been a great rivalry between West Indies and Australia," Holder told reporters yesterday.

"I think everybody is expecting a really good contest. We're up for the challenge. I think they're up for the challenge as well."

"I'm not caught up with the rivalry. It's a matter for us to go into tomorrow's game looking to execute our plans and beat Australia."

Both teams won their opening matches of the tournament, West Indies crushing Pakistan by seven wickets at Trent Bridge. "We obviously had one game here before," Holder said. "We



West Indies' captain Jason Holder (centre) talks with his players during a training session at Trent Bridge in Nottingham, England, yesterday. (AFP)

bowled 22 overs in the game. We didn't get a full allotment. But having said that, we've got a little bit of knowledge about the ground, how the wicket plays."

Pakistan beat World Cup favourites and hosts England in their second match and Holder is not getting carried away. "As I said, it's a wide-open tournament," he said. "All 10 teams are capable of lifting the World Cup. That's why we're here, they're the 10 best teams in the world."

"So I wouldn't get into the games that have been played. I just want to keep moving forward. We've got Australia tomorrow, and that's our next hurdle, and that's what I want to focus on."

"It's just a matter of playing good cricket on any given day. We want to execute in all three departments. We just want to be as positive as we possibly can be. Intent is something that we spoke about in the dressing-room."

West Indies have had fitness

concerns over destructive opening batsman Chris Gayle and all-rounder Andre Russell.

"I think the beauty with both of those guys is they've played enough cricket," Holder said.

"We just tend to trust them, take their word and then make a final decision. Chris was at practice for the last couple of days, so Chris for me is all well and ready to go. Andre will be obviously assessed today, and we're very, very hopeful that he'll be fit tomorrow."

Finch backs concussion subs in international cricket

AFP
Nottingham, United Kingdom

Australia captain Aaron Finch says he would welcome the introduction of concussion substitutes in international cricket.

A report in Britain's *Daily Telegraph* newspaper said the International Cricket Council could allow concussion subs from October 1 this year.

At present, substitutes in international matches can only field and are not allowed to bat or bowl.

But a two-year trial of concussion substitutes in various domestic cricket competitions around the world started in October 2017, allowing players to bat and bowl.

The issue was thrown into sharp relief at the ongoing World Cup in England and Wales when South Africa batsman Hashim Amla was struck on the head by a bouncer from England fast bowler Jofra Archer and had to retire hurt even though he was wearing a protective helmet. He resumed his innings later on

but was left out of the Proteas' second game, against Bangladesh, on medical grounds. Finch said yesterday that he had no qualms with allowing replacement batsmen or bowlers to take over from a concussed player at international level. "I know that it has worked in Australia in domestic cricket," the skipper said at Trent Bridge yesterday, a day before his side's World Cup match against the West Indies.

The opening batsman added: "The last thing you want is people getting hit, obviously, but

if there is, you also don't want the game to be determined by someone getting hit and then being out of the game. If that happens in the first over, that's a huge disadvantage."

In English domestic cricket the rule is that only like-for-like replacements are allowed, so a fast bowler cannot come in for an injured spinner.

"If everyone plays ball, I think it's a good decision," said Finch. "It's all about the safety of the player and at the end of the day, the game of cricket isn't as important as someone's health."

BOTTOMLINE

We need to improve our batting, says Sri Lankan skipper Karunaratne

IANIS
Cardiff, Wales

Sri Lanka skipper Dimuth Karunaratne admitted the fact that their batting has been not been up to the mark in the first two games of the ongoing World Cup and they need to work on it to improve their overall performance.

On Tuesday, Sri Lanka came out on top in a topsy-turvy affair at the Sophia Gardens as they successfully defended 187 to claim a narrow win against Afghanistan.

Put in to bat, Sri Lanka got off to a brilliant start, racing to 79/0 off the first 10 overs. Despite the fantastic start, the Sri Lankans were all out for 201. A collapse of 7 for 36 meant Sri Lanka went from 144 for 1 to 180 for 8.

This was the second successive match where Sri Lanka had a disastrous middle-order collapse, after losing 5 for 14 in their opening match against New Zealand.

The game had one significant rain delay, which resulted in the match being reduced to 41 overs a side, but Sri Lanka were bowled out for the second time in two matches before completing their allotted overs.

"We had a good start after a long time but suddenly, we lost a couple of wickets and were on the back foot. That's the negative part but otherwise, the

bowling and fielding was really good," said Karunaratne after the match.

"Only thing we need to work on is to improve our batting in the middle overs. Wickets were the key, if the openers get going, then 187 isn't easy to defend," he added.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan captain Gulbadin Naib also called on his batters to come out with an improved performance in the remaining matches.

Chasing a revised DLS target of 187, Afghanistan never got going and it became extremely difficult for them as they were reduced to 57 for 5 in the face of some accurate bowling from Sri Lanka.

When Pradeep got Naib for 23, the game swung back towards Sri Lanka, and despite the best efforts of Najibullah (43), Afghanistan finished 34 runs short of their target.

Nuwan Pradeep was the chief destroyer for Sri Lanka, finishing with figures of 4/31 in his nine overs.

"We need improvement in the batting department, need to learn to stitch small partnerships, especially against such quality bowling. At the start of the day, it was cloudy and I expected it to be the same throughout. We could have batted better, played straighter and watched the ball better," said Naib.

Sri Lanka will next face Pakistan while Afghanistan will lock horns with New Zealand.



Sri Lanka's captain Dimuth Karunaratne plays a shot during the 2019 ICC Cricket World Cup match against Afghanistan at Sophia Gardens stadium in Cardiff, Wales, on Tuesday. (AFP)

SPOTLIGHT

Ashes doubt for fatigued Aussie Test opener Burns

AFP
Sydney

Australia Test opener Joe Burns has been diagnosed with fatigue and burn-out stemming from a viral infection last year, throwing his chances of playing in this year's Ashes into serious doubt.

The 29-year-old, who scored a career-best 180 during Australia's last Test in February against Sri Lanka at Canberra, called time on his stint with English county side Lancashire last month for "personal reasons".

Queensland Cricket said in a statement he was dealing with "a protracted post-infectious fatigue disorder dating back to an October 2018 viral infection".

Burns, who has played 16 Tests and was a contender to open with David Warner against England in the five-match series, is recuperating.

"A definite prognosis for recovery is unavailable at present; however it is anticipated he will be fully available for cricket in the near future," added the statement.

Whether he recovers in time for the first Test at Edgbaston on August 1 remains to be seen, but his problems could open the door for Marcus Harris or Cameron Bancroft.

Coach Justin Langer told reporters it would be tough to select Burns, given how much county cricket he will miss.

"He's one player we were hoping would play six, seven, eight games of red-ball cricket," he said.

"That was the plan initially. Sometimes plans change, and we'll just have to monitor that over the next a little bit."

Burns was replaced in the Lancashire squad by fellow Australian Jake Lehmann, son of former national coach Darren Lehmann.

BOXING

Joshua takes shock loss to Ruiz on the chin

'I had no panic attack. I have to take my loss like a man. No blaming anyone or anything'

AFP
London

Anthony Joshua said yesterday there is no one to blame but himself for the shock loss of his heavyweight boxing titles to Andy Ruiz Jr last Saturday. The 29-year-old British pugilist went down to one of the biggest upsets in the history of the heavyweight division at Madison Square Garden with Ruiz sensationally stopping Joshua, the previously unbeaten WBA, IBF, and WBO heavyweight champion.

The 29-year-old Ruiz started the fight as a massive 32-1 underdog but floored Joshua four times on his way to a win which upended the heavyweight division. Joshua, whose camp activated a rematch clause on Tuesday, moved yesterday to dispel rumours something had been wrong with him as many pundits had wondered about his listless performance. "I had no panic attack," he said in video posted online. "I have to take my loss like a man. No blaming anyone or anything."

Joshua, who first came to public attention in winning Olympic gold in London in 2012, has refused to cut ties with trainer Rob McCracken and accepted the blame lay with him. "I am the one who went in there to perform and my performance did not go to plan. My gameplan didn't go to plan," said Joshua. "I have to readjust, analyse, do my best to correct it — and get the job done in the rematch."

Joshua, whose promoter Eddie Hearn initially said he felt his fighter would never recover from the defeat to his Mexican-American opponent, said unlike others he was not searching for excuses as to why he under-performed.

"There have been a lot of accusations and worries about what was wrong with me," he said. "I want to tell you this: I am a soldier and I have to take my ups and my downs — and on Saturday I took a loss. Congratulations to Andy Ruiz. He has six months or so to be champion because the belts go in the air and he has to defend them. I would not mind if (the rematch) was in New York again or in England."

Meanwhile, Hearn in a brief post said,



Anthony Joshua was shocked by Andy Ruiz Jr in the heavyweight title clash at New York's Madison Square Garden in New York on Saturday.

Joshua had opted for an immediate rematch against Ruiz Jr. "After meetings with AJ, (trainer) Rob (McCracken) and the management team in NY, we have today triggered the contracted rematch clause with Andy Ruiz Jr," Hearn wrote. "The fight will take place in Nov/Dec at a venue to be confirmed shortly."

The 29-year-old Ruiz started the

fight as a massive 32-1 underdog. In comments to ESPN, Hearn said Joshua was anxious to get back in the ring with Ruiz as quickly as possible. "There was no point in waiting," Hearn said.

"We've talked about it and it's happening. There's no other fight AJ wants, so there was no point waiting 30 days. Everybody needs clarity. We sat down

and it wasn't even a case of him asking what else is out there. The rematch is the fight we need, and that's what we'll be doing."

Hearn had initially indicated the rematch is likely to take place in Britain, where Joshua regularly sells out large-capacity venues. However he told ESPN on Tuesday that the choice of venue re-

mained open. "My gut feeling was the UK but not guaranteed," Hearn said.

"We have to look at everything. The people at (US broadcaster) DAZN and Madison Square Garden would like to do Part 2 in the US. Joshua came to Andy Ruiz's country for the first fight, so it kind of makes sense to the second fight in the UK. So we'll see."

RUGBY

New Zealand's long-serving boss Tew to step down

Reuters
Wellington

Steve Tew will step down as New Zealand Rugby CEO at the end of 2019 after a 12-year tenure highlighted by four World Cup titles and a massive increase in revenues. Tew, appointed in 2007, restructured NZR into a commercial juggernaut that has helped deliver the last two World Cups for the All Blacks and two of the last three titles for the women's Black Ferns.

He will hope to sign out with a fifth World Cup triumph when the All Blacks bid for an unprecedented hat-trick in Japan from September. "I've always been a great advocate for challenging convention and keeping New Zealand Rugby fresh and invigorated, whilst always encouraging our people to grow and extend themselves," said Tew.

"I believe the time is right for someone else to lead the organisation. It has been a great privilege to hold this position and I'm grateful for every day that I have experienced."

Under his stewardship, NZR maintained rugby's dominance in the South Pacific nation while delivering global silverware despite a tough policy on players' eligibility. Barring a handful of exceptions, overseas-based players are ineligible to play for the All Blacks but the strength of the country's talent pathways and coaching has mitigated the player drain.

New Zealand's Super Rugby teams have claimed six of the last seven championships in the mainly southern hemisphere competition, with the Canterbury Crusaders favoured to win a third in succession in coming weeks. It has not all been plain sailing. The former Canterbury CEO had to announce a record NZ\$15.9mm loss for 2009 after investments went sour amid the global financial crisis. NZR also came under fire in 2016 over its handling of assault allegations from a stripper hired by Waikato Chiefs players during their end-of-season celebrations.

The organisation has proved flawless at running major events, however, with Tew overseeing New Zealand's successful hosting of the men's 2011 World Cup.

F1

Hamilton and Mercedes set their sights on seventh straight win at Canadian GP



Reuters
London

The sevens are aligning for Lewis Hamilton in Canada with another of Michael Schumacher's Formula One records in his sights as Mercedes aim for a seventh win in seven races this season. Montreal has been a happy hunting ground for the five times world champion and Sunday could see the Briton equal Schumacher's seven Canadian Grand Prix victories between 1994 and 2004.

Yet Hamilton, who leads Finnish teammate Valtteri Bottas by 17 points in the standings after four wins out of six, can take nothing for granted at a power-sensitive track named after Ferrari great Gilles Villeneuve. Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel won from pole position in Canada last year and Mercedes have suggested the high-speed circuit could again favour Italian rivals whose season has yet to get into gear.

"We are beginning to see more clearly the strengths and weaknesses of our car. In the past six races, we were very strong in the corners but lost time on the straights,"

said principal Toto Wolff. "This will make Canada a huge challenge for us as the track characteristics could favour our opponents — there are many long straights, and fewer corners in which to make up lap time."

Hamilton, who took the first Formula One win of his career at the circuit with McLaren in 2007, indicated after winning the previous race in Monaco that a Mercedes engine upgrade was expected. While Mercedes have kept a lid on their plans, the timing would be right since the rules allow each driver three engines per season and Canada comes a third of the way through the 21-race championship.

Ferrari, Renault and Honda have already introduced their upgraded engines. A main concern for the champions will be tyre management, with Hamilton struggling on the wrong choice in Monaco.

"We need to learn from Monaco... because this situation in Montreal, you lose the race," Wolff told reporters at the time, cautioning also against too much confidence after such an unprecedented start to the campaign. "We must never be carried away by saying we are just flying at the moment and it's going to continue like this," said the Austrian. Ferrari were out of sorts in Monaco, de-

spite Vettel finishing second for the team's best result so far this season, with Red Bull's Max Verstappen posing the biggest threat to Hamilton but hit with a time penalty. "It's a fun track, at least you can overtake if needed and I always enjoy going there," said Verstappen, who was third in Canada last year behind second-placed Bottas. "I expect Ferrari to be more competitive in Canada, so for us it may be a bit more difficult, but as always we will try and maximise the result."

Bottas, beaten into third in Monaco after a pitlane clash with Verstappen that cost him second place and Mercedes a sixth successive one-two, will be fired up to claw back points from Hamilton. While rivals talked up Ferrari's prospects, team boss Mattia Binotto has sounded less optimistic.

"We know we're not competitive enough right now," he said. "And for the time being we haven't got any more changes coming on the car that will have a significant effect on the problems we have encountered since the start of the season."

Away from the leaders, the Racing Point team (previously Force India) will be looking for a strong first home race under their Canadian ownership.

GOLF

Thomas hopes to shake off rust

AFP
Los Angeles

Justin Thomas is usually bidding to make a big splash when he plays a new tournament, but he'll be happy just to make the cut in his Canadian Open debut this week. "Playing four days would be a good start, as opposed to just two," said Thomas, who failed to make it to the weekend at the Memorial Tournament last week.

Thomas says he is still trying to shake off the rust from a six-week layoff between the Memo-

rial and finishing tied 12th at The Masters in April.

"It was weird, because I really felt pretty good about my game last week," he said.

"I was really rusty and was making some stupid mistakes that I don't usually do. So I was just trying to play my way out of that. The more time you can get in competition, I feel like the quicker I'll get out of the rust."

World number six Thomas faces a strong field in this week's tournament, which is the final tune-up before the US Open, including three of the world's top four in the shape of Brooks Koepka, Dustin Johnson and

Rory McIlroy. "My first-ever time to Canada, so I'm excited to be here," Thomas said.

"You know, it was obviously a late add. It wasn't exactly in the plans, but I definitely need to get more reps just going into the Open. I heard a lot of great things about the course," he added of the Hamilton Golf and Country Club outside of Toronto.

The 26-year-old is seeking his first win in 2019 with his best performance being a runner-up finish at the Genesis Open in February.

"Going forward, I am trying to get more competitive rounds in, and just more tournament conditions," he said.

Gymnast Rakan wins bronze in Singapore



Qatar's Rakan al-Harithi (centre), who won bronze at the Singapore International Gymnastics Championship, was received at the Hamad International Airport by Ali al-Hitmi (second left), president of the Qatar Gymnastics Federation. Rakan finished third in Pommel Horse apparatus in a field of nine competitors. Rakan was delighted to return home with a bronze medal. "I am very happy with my achievement as compared to me, my opponents were experienced to at the international level. I did my routines exceedingly well and showed my capability in a high level competition," he said.

MLB

Newcomer Bruce homers twice in Phils' win over Padres

Ryu rolls on as Dodgers shut out Diamondbacks



Philadelphia Phillies left fielder Jay Bruce (right) is congratulated by right fielder Bryce Harper (left) and catcher JT Realmuto during the fifth inning at Petco Park. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

Reuters
San Diego

Jay Bruce wasted little time in making his presence felt with the Philadelphia Phillies.

Two days after being acquired by the Phillies from the Seattle Mariners, Bruce hit two home runs, doubled and equalled his career high with six RBIs on Tuesday night to lead the struggling Phillies to a 9-6 win over the host San Diego Padres.

The Phillies snapped a five-game losing streak. Earlier Tuesday, they learned that center fielder Andrew McCutchen will miss the remainder of the season with a torn ACL in his left knee. Bruce made his Phillies debut Monday night when McCutchen left the game.

Bruce started on Tuesday and went 3-for-4, including his 15th and 16th homers of the season, and he scored three runs.

Seven homers were hit in the game. Scott Kingery and pinch hitter Maikel Franco added solo home shots for the Phillies.

Franmil Reyes hit two tape-measure blasts (426 and 438 feet) off the batter's eye in center for the Padres, and Eric Hosmer added a two-run shot off Edgar Garcia in San Diego's three-run eighth.

Both of Bruce's homers were notable. His

RESULTS		
Phils	9-6	Padres
Orioles	12-11	Rangers
Dodgers	9-0	D'backs
Braves	12-5	Pirates
Blue Jays	4-3	Yankees
Red Sox	8-3	Royals
Indians	5-2	Twins
Marlins	16-0	Brewers
Cubs	6-3	Rockies
Reds	4-1	Cardinals
Giants	9-3	Mets
Nationals	9-5	White Sox
Tigers	9-6	Rays
Athletics	4-2	Angels
Astros	11-5	Mariners

two-run shot in the fourth erased a 2-1 Padres lead and put the Phillies ahead for good.

That homer was also the front end of a set of back-to-back homers against rookie Padres starter Chris Paddack (4-4). Kingery followed with his fourth homer of the season.

Bruce's second homer, off left-handed reliever Brad Wieck in the fifth inning, was

also the ninth grand slam of his career and shot the Phillies to an 8-2 lead. Right-hander Jerad Eickhoff (3-3) started for the Phillies and allowed three runs on four hits with five strikeouts and no walks over six innings. Closer Hector Neris got his 11th save.

Paddack allowed six runs (five earned) on eight hits with four strikeouts and no walks in 4 1/3 innings.

Paddack has allowed five homers in his past two starts, including a set of back-to-back home runs in both outings.

Hyun-Jin Ryu continued his dominant pitching with seven scoreless innings as the Los Angeles Dodgers won their seventh consecutive game, a 9-0 victory over the Arizona Diamondbacks on Tuesday in Phoenix.

Ryu (9-1) allowed three hits, walked none and struck out two. He retired 12 in a row at one point, won his sixth consecutive start and lowered his ERA from 1.48 to 1.35. He has not allowed a run in five of his past six outings.

Yimi Garcia and Scott Alexander each pitched a scoreless inning of relief to complete the Dodgers' eighth shutout of the season and third in the past week. Los Angeles has won 11 of its past 12 games.

Cody Bellinger hit a two-run triple off the top of the wall in center field in the first inning to stake Ryu to an early lead and extend his hitting streak to 11 games.

Corey Seager doubled twice and drove in two runs for Los Angeles, which scored six runs in the final three innings.

Enrique Hernandez had two hits, including an opposite-field homer to lead off the seventh for a 4-0 lead.

Arizona starter Taylor Clarke (1-2) allowed three runs (two earned) and four hits in five innings. The rookie struck out four and walked two.

Ryu, the National League Pitcher of the Month for May, twice worked around trouble due to shoddy defense, including two errors by Seager at shortstop.

After a pair of two-out errors by the Dodgers in the first inning, Ryu got Christian Walker to tap back to him on a checked swing.

In the seventh, the Diamondbacks had runners on first and third on a single and an error, but Ryu induced Nick Ahmed to hit into an inning-ending double play.

Los Angeles made it 3-0 in the third, thanks to two Diamondbacks errors. First, second baseman Ildemaro Vargas booted a potential inning-ending double play.

Then, with two outs and runners on the corners, Clarke's wild pickoff throw to first allowed Joc Pederson to score from third.

Diamondbacks right fielder Adam Jones left the game in the top of the fourth due to right hamstring tightness. Team officials said he is day-to-day.

NFL

Mets to Brady: There's only one 'Tom Terrific'

AFP
Washington

New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady's request to trademark the nickname "Tom Terrific" is getting slammed, particularly by two former New York Mets who were teammates of Hall of Fame pitcher Tom Seaver.

"Maybe it's the new athlete," former Mets first baseman Ed Kranepool said Tuesday in a USA Today story. "Maybe it's the 'I' generation, who can only think about himself. He's the greatest quarterback who ever lived and I supported him over the years, and any time I'm rooting in football, I'm rooting for Tom Brady. But when you ask me about Tom Terrific and having played behind a guy like (Seaver), there's only one guy who can be called Tom Terrific and that's him. But when you're first in line, I think there should only be one of any kind. (Brady) is the second model."

Seaver, though, never filed for a trademark of the nickname that first was popularised by the "Tom Terrific" cartoon. Seaver is now battling dementia.

According to the USA Today report, Brady's company, TEB Capital, has filed for two "Tom Terrific" trademarks, one for trading cards, posters, and signed photographs, and another for clothing.

On Monday, the Mets tweeted to the United States Patent and Trademark Office, making their point with a photo of the right-handed Seaver during his heyday with the Mets.

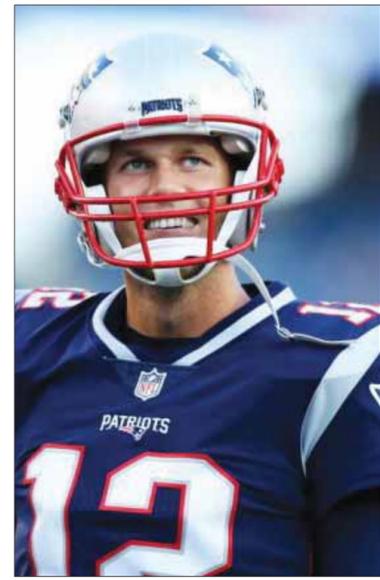
"Hey @uspto, with all due respect to @TomBrady...There's only one #TomTerrific to us. #LGM #Mets," the tweet read.

A planned protest Tuesday at an Upper East Side restaurant in New York never gained momentum as, along with Kranepool and former Mets outfielder Art Shamsky, only a few fans showed up. But some reportedly grabbed Brady No. 12 jerseys and threw beans at them, then tossed them in a trash can.

Shamsky, who played with the Miracle Mets team that included Kranepool and Seaver and won the 1969 World Series, interviewed Seaver in 2017 for a book he was writing about the aftermath of that team.

"Tom Seaver will always be known as 'Tom Terrific,'" Shamsky said Tuesday. "He will always be the face of the Mets, and one of the greatest pitchers who ever pitched in the major leagues."

Seaver won 311 games in a 20-year career. He was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame with a then-record of appearing on 98.84 percent of voters' ballots.



NHL

Chicago Blackhawks hire Crawford as assistant

Reuters
Washington

Marc Crawford, the former NHL head coach who led the Colorado Avalanche to the Stanley Cup title in 1996, was hired Tuesday as an assistant on the Chicago Blackhawks' coaching staff.

The 58-year-old Crawford, who most recently spent three seasons on the Ottawa Senators' staff and was their interim coach at the end of the 2017-18 season, will work with 34-year-old Jeremy Colliton, who is now the youngest coach in the league. The Blackhawks also have two other assistants - Sheldon Brookbank and Tomas Mitell - who are 38 years old. Crawford's son, Dylan, also works for the Blackhawks as an assistant video coach.

Colliton and the Blackhawks will undoubtedly rely on the experience of Marc Crawford, who was also a head coach with the Vancouver Canucks, Los Angeles Kings and Dallas Stars and has a 246-189-62-32 record.

"Knowing the league is important, and it's not just knowing the personnel on the other side," Crawford said in a Chicago

Sun-Times story. "It's also understanding the idiosyncrasies of every other building, having a little bit more knowledge about how other staffs are and how they implement their strategies ... recognising the officials, recognising league officials, and how the league works."

"I should be able to help them in that regard."

Though disappointed that he didn't get the permanent job as Ottawa's head coach, Crawford likes where he has landed. "Chicago is a team that goes the extra mile to find a way to get things done," he said. "No disrespect to any of the other places I've been, but it's really nice when you have that organisation."

Calling Colliton a "very innovative" young coach, Crawford added, "If I was the head coach, I would do things almost exactly the way he's doing them, from the standpoint of systems."

BRUINS D CHARA SUSTAINED BROKEN JAW

Boston Bruins defenseman Zdeno Chara sustained a broken jaw when hit in the face by a puck in Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final, multiple media outlets reported Tuesday.

However, the Bruins continue

to list the 42-year-old captain's status as undecided. The best-of-seven championship series between the Bruins and the St. Louis Blues is tied at 2-2 heading into Game 5 on Thursday night in Boston. Chara's face was bloodied when he was struck by the puck Monday in Boston's 4-2 loss at St. Louis.

"Nothing new," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy told reporters Tuesday morning before the team returned to Boston. "Obviously, he's got to get back to Boston and get looked at a little closer and we'll go from there."

Chara was injured by the deflected puck early in the second period, and he did not return to the ice. He did rejoin the bench in the third period, lending support to his teammates while wearing a full shield on his helmet and despite being "very uncomfortable," according to Cassidy.

"He's an absolute warrior," Bruins forward Brad Marchand told NHL.com. "I think if it wasn't for the doctor, he would have played in that game. He's that kind of guy. You're gonna have to kill him to keep him off. He's an absolute leader."

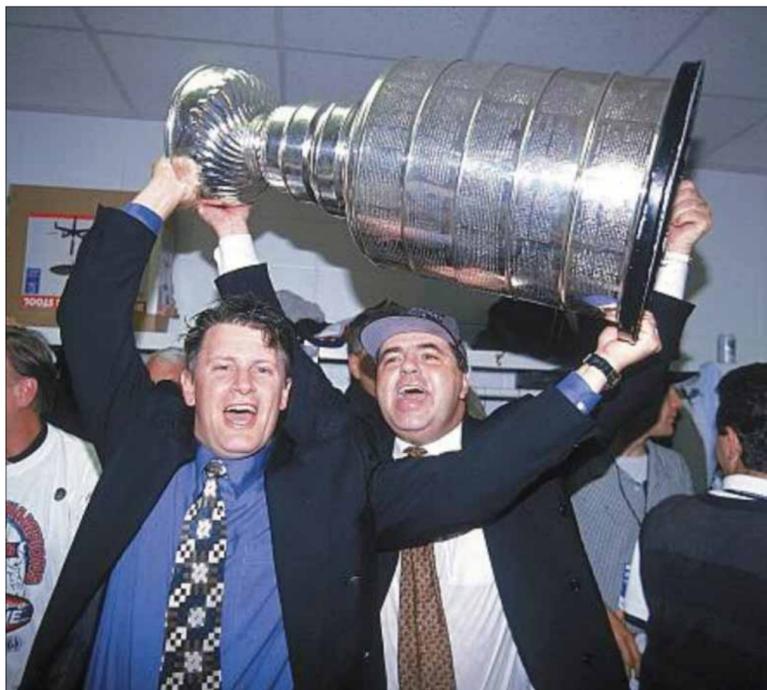
In addition to being the Bruins' best penalty-killer, Chara has contributed one goal and

four assists in 20 games this postseason. Chara missed 20 games during the regular season with a knee injury, so the team has experience playing without its 6-foot-9 captain.

"We know we can win with guys out of the lineup, it's just the magnitude of the time of the year," Cassidy said. "This matchup is not good with Zee out, let's face it. They're a big, heavy team, so you lose that element. Zee's great on the penalty kill. ... He's a shutdown defender. He forces guys to really go outside and not get inside."

BLUE JACKETS SIGN VEHVILAINEN

The Columbus Blue Jackets signed goaltender Veini Vehvilainen to a two-year entry level contract. Vehvilainen was the team's sixth-round selection in the 2018 NHL Draft. Playing with Karpas in Finland's Liiga league in 2018-19, Vehvilainen posted a 25-8-5 record, a 1.58 goals-against average, .933 save percentage and six shutouts in 38 games, leading the league in those categories. The 22-year-old 64-30-21 record with a 1.83 GAA, .926 save percentage and 13 shutouts in 119 career Liiga games.



SPOTLIGHT

Lure of Italy strong, says Chelsea's manager Sarri

The 60-year-old former Napoli coach has been strongly linked with the Juventus job

AFP
London

Chelsea manager Maurizio Sarri gave the strongest hint yet that he wishes to return to Italy and probably take the Juventus job by saying he misses his friends and elderly parents. The 60-year-old former Napoli coach has been strongly linked with the Juventus job left vacant after Massimiliano Allegri resigned following a highly successful five year spell in charge which included five league titles, four Coppa Italia's and reaching two Champions League finals.

Sarri, who unusually for a top football coach came to the sport after a successful career as a banker, has enjoyed a fine end to a rollercoaster season with Chelsea. He failed to win over a section of fans but still guided Chelsea to the Europa League trophy – the 4-1 win over Arsenal bringing him his first piece of silverware – third place in the Premier League and lost to Manchester City on penalties in the League Cup final.

However, Sarri – whose departure will cost Juventus £5mn (\$6.4mn) – told Vanity Fair magazine it has been a 'heavy year'. And the ex-Napoli chief is aware that next year will be potentially tougher with the likely departure of playmaker Eden Hazard to Real Madrid and the club coming under a UEFA transfer ban and unable to find a replacement.

But the pull away from London is largely personal, explained Sarri. "For us Italians the call of home is strong," Sarri told Vanity Fair. "I feel that something is missing. It has been a heavy year. I begin to feel the weight of distant friends and elderly parents I rarely see. But at my age, I only make professional choices. I won't be able to work for 20 years. It's hard work, the bench."

The manner of Sarri's leaving will be far more cordial than that of his Italian predecessor Antonio Conte, who pursued Chelsea over his sacking and was awarded a reported £9mn at a Premier League tribunal last month.

Sarri, though, does not believe if he takes the Juventus job it will upset Napoli fans. He enjoyed an impressive three year spell there from 2015-18 guiding them twice to runners-up spot and the other season third place in Serie A and earning himself the Serie A coach of the year in 2016/17.

"The Neapolitans know the love I feel for them. I chose to move abroad last year and not to go on an Italian team,"

said Sarri. "The relationship will not change. Loyalty is giving 110% when you are there."

What does it mean to be faithful?" Italian international Jorginho, who Sarri brought with him from Napoli, wants him to stay and is not so sure the Neapolitans will take so kindly to him accepting the Juventus post. "The Napoli fans still have him in their hearts; it's normal that they could get angry," Jorginho said in comments published in the British media. "They could treat it as a betrayal; they're like that. We'll see what happens."

Names mentioned as potential successors to Sarri include former Chelsea star Frank Lampard, who guided Derby County to the Championship play-off final in his debut season as a manager, although some feel he is still too raw for the challenge.

SARRI WOULD 'BETRAY' NAPOLI BY COACHING JUVENTUS: INSIGNE
Meanwhile, Napoli captain Lorenzo Insigne said that Sarri would be 'betraying' his former club should he agree to coach rivals Juventus. Insigne played under Sarri at Napoli between 2015 and 2018, finishing twice runners-up in Serie A behind eight-time reigning champions Juventus.

"If Sarri went to Juve for us Neapolitans it would surely be a betrayal," Insigne told a press conference with the Italian national team at Coverciano near Florence. "Choosing Juve will hurt, but we must take note that the coach is a professional and in Naples he gave his all. "It is his own decision, but I hope in the end he will change his mind."

Under new coach Carlo Ancelotti the club once again finished runners-up behind Juventus, with their last Serie A title coming back in 1990. "Napoli have not won for a long time, and it hurts us, because we're strong and we've often come so close," said Insigne, who took over the captain's armband in February after Marek Hamsik's departure for China.

"The thing I want most is to raise a trophy with this shirt. I have just turned 28, I am neither young nor old, it is the right age to give something more, I have the necessary qualities."

Italy are training before upcoming Euro 2020 qualifiers against Greece and Bosnia-Herzegovina. "We're building a great group, with the aim of qualifying at all costs for the next Europeans," he added. "We are Italy, we deserve to participate."



Maurizio Sarri guided Chelsea to the Europa League trophy and third place in the Premier League. (Reuters)

FOCUS

Infantino says would welcome China bid for 2030 WC

AFP
Paris

FIFA president Gianni Infantino said yesterday he would welcome a Chinese bid to stage the 2030 World Cup after the country was named to host the Asian Cup in 2023. Qatar will host the 2022 finals, before a joint North American tournament in 2026 in Canada, the United States and Mexico.

Bids from South America and Europe, including potentially from Britain and Ireland, have been mooted for what should be a 48-team competition in 2030. "For me, as FIFA president, the more the merrier. The more bidders we have the happier I am," said Infantino shortly after being re-elected by acclamation for a second term as president at the FIFA Congress in Paris. In the past it has been FIFA policy for the different continents to take turns hosting the finals, and Infantino even said he wasn't sure if a Chinese bid would be considered for 2030, just eight years after it goes to Qatar.

However, China's football fan President, Xi Jinping, has stated his aim for the country to stage the showpiece one day, with 2030 and 2034 often mentioned as possibilities. It was announced as the host of the 2023 Asian Cup on Tuesday.

"We will discuss it in the coming months, including at the next FIFA Council in October in Shanghai, and there we will put down some markers in terms of timing and so on," Infantino said. When asked when a decision would be taken on 2030, he replied: "The next presidential election is in 2023 so I guess it will be in 2022 or 2024, and we will see if China can bid."

FIFA CHIEF EYES '\$50BN' WINDFALL FOR NEW CLUB WORLD CUP

Meanwhile, Infantino believes his new Club World Cup could generate as much as \$50bn in commercial income when it starts in 2021. Infantino is pressing on with plans already approved for the expanded competition. The Club World Cup in its present format involves only seven teams, but he believes a 24-team competition will bring in huge sums, possibly even more than the \$25bn previously quoted. "In terms of commercialisation I hope to make 50bn, not 25. I'm not sure we'll get them but I hope so," Infantino said, although he did not state how many editions that would cover.

A source said that such a figure was "scarcely credible" given that the initial offer of \$25bn covered three editions of the Club World Cup and three editions of a global Nations League, with the latter project subsequently having been abandoned.

The plan for a new 24-team Club World Cup starting in 2021 – with the participation of eight teams from Europe – was approved at the FIFA Council meeting in Miami in March despite opposition from UEFA and the powerful European Club Association.

LA LIGA

'Enthusiastic' Lopetegui ready to bounce back with Sevilla

AFP
Madrid

Julen Lopetegui is ready to put his nightmare six months with Spain and Real Madrid behind him after being appointed head coach of Sevilla. Lopetegui was sacked by Spain on the eve of last year's World Cup for agreeing to take charge of Real Madrid, where he then lasted only four and half months, following a disappointing start to the season.

After losing arguably the two biggest jobs in Spanish football inside half a year, Lopetegui has

been given the chance to rebuild his reputation at Sevilla. "I take this job with the utmost enthusiasm and ambition to try to do the absolute best I can do," Lopetegui said at a press conference a day after his appointment on Tuesday.

"I am eager to achieve the goals the club has and in that regard, we are ambitious. Nobody will beat us for ambition and motivation. We know we will have to work hard, that we cannot just talk a good game, and if we do, I am sure we will succeed."

Lopetegui's appointment is the first big decision of Sevilla's sporting director Monchi, who had been linked with Arsenal before deciding to return in March to the club where he previ-

ously spent 17 years. Monchi would not confirm the club's specific aims under Lopetegui but the minimum requirement is likely to be Champions League qualification. Sevilla missed out last season after finishing sixth in La Liga, with Pablo Machin sacked in March and his stand-in Joaquin Caparros failing to earn the job long-term.

Neither Spain nor Real Madrid benefited from their snap decisions to remove Lopetegui. Spain were beaten by Russia in the last 16 of the World Cup while Madrid finished the season 19 points behind Barcelona, after also sacking his replacement Santiago Solari. Madrid had taken only 14 points from a possible 30 under Lopetegui.



ROUND-UP

Midfielder Eriksen ready to leave Spurs

Danish midfielder Christian Eriksen says he is ready to leave Tottenham Hotspur to take on a new challenge at another club ahead of next season. Eriksen, who arrived at Spurs from Ajax Amsterdam in August 2013, has been a pivotal figure in Mauricio Pochettino's squad which finished runners-up to Liverpool in the Champions League and took fourth place in the Premier League.

"I feel that I am at a stage of my career where I would like to try something new," the 27-year-old Eriksen told Danish newspaper Ekstra Bladet. "I have the deepest respect for everything that is happening at Tottenham and it would not be something negative to stay. But I have also said that I would like to try something new. I hope that something will be decided this summer. That is the plan. In football you never know when there could be a decision like that. It could be at any point."

Eriksen has one year left on his Spurs contract and Spanish media reports have linked him with a move to Real Madrid, who are looking to revamp the squad under Zinedine Zidane after a disappointing season in which they finished third in the league. The news of Eriksen considering his

future will come as a blow to Spurs, who were looking to use their emphatic run to the Champions League final as a springboard for next season. The club have not made a signing since Lucas Moura arrived in January 2018, and Pochettino would hope to keep hold of his experienced players to challenge the likes of Liverpool and reigning champions Manchester City in the Premier League.

GRANADA BACK IN SPANISH TOP FLIGHT AFTER DRAW WITH MALLORCA
Granada gained promotion to La Liga after a 1-1 draw at Mallorca on Tuesday secured their return to the Spanish top flight with a match to spare. The result left Granada second in the standings of Spain's LaLiga 123, five points ahead of third-placed Malaga who beat Albacete 2-1.

Granada's tally of 76 points made sure they could no longer be overhauled by either Malaga or fourth-placed Albacete, who both have 71 points and will enter a playoff.

Leaders Osasuna, who had earlier secured promotion, have 84 points after last week's 3-2 win at Cordoba.

Fifth-placed Mallorca, who are also assured of a playoff spot, took a 69th-minute lead through Salva Sevilla before Federico

San Emeterio struck for Granada in the 88th to silence the home crowd. The top two from Spain's second tier gain automatic promotion to La Liga while the next four teams enter a playoff for one remaining berth.

STURRIDGE LEAVES LIVERPOOL

England forward Daniel Sturridge will leave Liverpool before the start of next season, the European champions announced. Starting only two Champions League games this season Sturridge was an unused sub in the final, but at 29 will have no shortage of suitors after previous spells at Man City and Chelsea. Liverpool also said defender Alberto Moreno would depart Anfield at the end of his current deal.

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp told the club's website: "The most important words to say to these two remarkable players is, 'Thank you!' Sturridge joined Liverpool from Chelsea in January 2013 and went on to score 67 goals in 160 appearances for them. "Daniel has earned the right to be considered a modern-day Liverpool great," Klopp said. "Some of the goals he has scored for Liverpool were so, so, so important."

Qatar lose to Guatemala in Toulon



The Qatar Under-23 team lost to Guatemala 0-2 in a Group B match at the Toulon International Tournament in Salon-de-Provence, Southern France, yesterday. Rudy Barrientos and Jose Ardon scored for Guatemala. Qatar, who had lost to France in their opening match, will take on Brazil in their last group fixture. This is the sixth time that Qatar is featuring in the tournament. Qatar squad is using the Toulon tournament to get match practice as they gear up for the AFC Asian U-23 Cup to be played in Thailand next year. The event in Thailand will act as the qualifier for Olympic Games in Tokyo 2020.

NATIONS LEAGUE

Resurgent Dutch threaten to keep England waiting

'When you look at Virgil now, this is a big, big personality on the pitch'

AFP
Guimaraes, Portugal

England's long wait for a first international trophy since 1966 could be just days away at the Nations League finals in Portugal, but Ronald Koeman's resurgent Netherlands present a hazardous hurdle for the Three Lions in today's semi-final in Guimaraes.

A run to the semi-finals of last year's World Cup and memorable victories over Spain and Croatia to make the last four of another tournament within 12 months have raised expectations that Gareth Southgate in coaching the generation to finally end England's wait for glory.

By contrast, the Dutch have had a lean few years after failing to make it to Russia last year or qualify for Euro 2016. Even though the Dutch lost a thrilling opening Euro 2000 qualifier 3-2 to Germany in March there are no fears they will miss out for a third consecutive major tournament. The side captained by the imperious Virgil van Dijk is also blessed with the core of an Ajax side that were seconds away from facing Van Dijk's Liverpool in the Champions League final.

Tottenham robbed the Eredivisie of its first Champions League finalist since 1996 with a dramatic late semi-final, second leg winner in Amsterdam as the Premier League dominated European competition this season.

But there is no guarantee English success will carry over to the international stage. Indeed, there were as many Dutchman as English players in Liverpool's starting line-up as they lifted the European Cup on Saturday with Van Dijk and Georginio Wijnaldum. One of Koeman's first acts when taking charge of his country last year was to make Van Dijk his skipper having worked with him at Southampton. "When you look at Virgil now, this is a big, big personality on the pitch. He is a leader," Koeman said.

"That is why I made him captain. I knew him from Southampton. I thought: 'he can do more - he can carry more responsibility. He is strong; he has a great character and enjoys the responsibility.'"

Van Dijk's man-of-the-match display in the Champions League final to go with his Premier League players' player of the year award has increased his chances of winning the Ballon d'Or. Lifting the Nations League would only strengthen his case and it is his centre-back partner at



The Netherlands' Georginio Wijnaldum (right) and Ryan Babel during a training session yesterday in Guimaraes, Portugal, on the eve of their UEFA Nations League semi-final against England. (Reuters)

international level who may take his tag as the world's most expensive defender.

Matthijs de Ligt is also a leader at just 19. The towering Ajax captain is wanted by a host of Europe's top clubs after a stellar season. "We have the best centre defenders with De Ligt and Virgil," said Koeman. "That's great because you build the house, always, from downstairs. You don't start with the roof. That is the target as a manager: goalkeeper, defender. The centre part of the team has to be strong."

The Netherlands' spine is further strengthened by another two Ajax products Frenkie de Jong and Donny van de Beek alongside Wijnaldum in midfield. Barcelona agreed a 75m euro fee for De Jong to move this summer in January even before Ajax dumped Real Madrid and Juventus out of the Champions League.

Koeman's men have already shown their capabilities in knocking out world champions France and Germany to make the Nations League last four. "In the last few years, yes, it is the best genera-

tion, but they are just starting," added Koeman. "We are on a good way back to where we would like to stay as a country."

Koeman played when the Netherlands gained their only major tournament win at the European Championships in 1988. While he insisted Nations League success is not on a par with that feat, it would send a strong signal that the Dutch really are back. "It's Nations League. It's not a Euros; it's not a world championship," he added. "Winning the Nations League is important, but you cannot compare."

SPOTLIGHT

Alexander-Arnold still on cloud nine

Reuters
Porto, Portugal

Liverpool full back Trent Alexander-Arnold, still on a high from becoming a Champions League winner, is hoping for more celebrations as he prepares for today's Nations League semi-final against the Netherlands.

The 20-year-old, who played a key role in Liverpool's sixth European Cup success, is battling with Manchester City's Kyle Walker for the right back spot in Gareth Southgate's team. After the 2-0 triumph over Tottenham Hotspur in Madrid and then enjoying Liverpool's open-top bus celebration, the defender met up with his England team mates at St George's Park on Tuesday before flying out to Portugal and he says he was given a great welcome in the camp.

"The reception has been unbelievable. They're really happy for us and positive. For the Tottenham lads it must be tough for them, but they've come and congratulated us and were one of the first to do it," he said.

"Even if it was the other way round you have to put what happened with our clubs to one side and focus on winning something for your country. We're a team now, a few days ago we weren't, but now we are so we need to recognise that and if we pull together for the same aim then we've

got a great chance of reaching where we want."

Liverpool born and bred and a product of the club's youth system, the win was particularly special for Alexander-Arnold. "I'm obviously still on a massive high, it's a dream come true and it's something that you always want to do. You never think that it could actually be possible, but to have a major trophy under the belt now is massive and hopefully we'll be able to push on for club and country and get some more," he said.

Two Liverpool teammates could be lining up against Alexander-Arnold for a Netherlands side which is once again looking strong after failing to qualify for last year's World Cup. Defender Virgil van Dijk, who was man of the match in Madrid, and midfielder Georginio Wijnaldum are both in Ronald Koeman's squad for the Nations League final four.

"It's an incredibly tough game. Even if I didn't know them both personally, you'd still know that the Netherlands are coming back to where they once were. They play some really good football, they've got a really good squad, really young and exciting. It's a bit similar to us in the terms of the way they are going about things and it's exciting to see," he said. The winner of today's match in Guimaraes will take on either hosts Portugal or Switzerland in the final - who were facing each other late last night.



England winger Trent Alexander-Arnold. (Reuters)

FOCUS

Buffon looking for 'new challenges' in Italy after PSG exit

AFP
Paris

Giuseppe Buffon said yesterday that he will return to Italy after agreeing to leave Paris Saint-Germain at the end of the month, with the World Cup winner looking for "new challenges" in his home country after a year in the French capital.

Ligue 1 champions PSG had announced earlier that both club and player had agreed not to renew the former Italy captain's contract, which expires on June 30, after an underwhelming spell between the PSG sticks. "Today my adventure outside Italy ends: PSG offered me a contract renewal that I didn't feel it was right to sign given my desire for new experiences and professional challenges," the 41-year-old wrote on Instagram.

The veteran goalkeeper, who won the World Cup in 2006 and is Italy's most-capped player with 176 appearances, did not say he would retire as a player and did not specify what challenges he was seeking. "Ernest Hemingway wrote that there are only two places in the world where people can live happily: at home and in Paris. Today onwards, this will also apply to me: Paris, in some way, will always remain my home," he wrote in a statement published



on PSG's website. Buffon joined PSG last summer after ending a trophy-packed 17-year career at Italian giants Juventus and played 25 times in all competitions last season, winning the Ligue 1 title and the curtain raiser Champions Trophy.

This season's league title was the 10th of Buffon's career, adding to a bulging trophy cabinet that contains just about every honour in football. However the Champions League has eluded him despite him spending the bulk of his career at Juve, one of Europe's biggest clubs, and it was hoped that he might break his duck with the Qatari-funded Parisians.

However despite winning

the league at a canter, the past season was a poor one for both Buffon and a team with lofty ambitions on the European stage. They missed out on both domestic cup competitions and most importantly were dumped out of the Champions League by Manchester United in embarrassing style, blowing a 2-0 first-leg lead to go out on away goals following a controversial last-gasp penalty.

Buffon made a crucial error that helped United achieve their remarkable comeback, spilling Marcus Rashford's weak shot into the path of Romelu Lukaku to allow the Belgian to score the away side's second and set up a dramatic finish.

TRANSFER

'Bayern have not yet tabled bid for Sane'

Reuters
Berlin

German champions Bayern Munich have not yet made an offer for Manchester City winger Leroy Sane despite their long-standing desire to sign him, club CEO Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said yesterday. Bayern, who won their seventh straight German league title along with the German Cup this season, have repeatedly said they would like to lure the speedy 23-year-old winger to Munich as they look to overhaul their squad.

On Tuesday the club confirmed the widely expected departure of midfielder James Rod-

riguez, on loan from Real Madrid, who joins Frank Ribery, Arjen Robben, Rafinha and potentially Jerome Boateng on the way out. But Rummenigge said reports of an 80m euros offer for Sane were wide of the mark.

"We have not yet submitted an offer for Leroy Sane," Rummenigge told *Sportbild* magazine. "We are still a long way from this point. Initially the player has to decide if he could imagine joining Bayern. Once that is the case then we will go into specific negotiations with Manchester City."

After being voted the PFA's Young Player of the Year for 2017/18, Sane struggled to hold down a regular starting spot at City last season, competing with Raheem Sterling and Bernardo Silva among others. City coach Pep

Guardiola has said he had tried to extend the player's contract over the past year and a half but Sane's reluctance to put pen to paper has raised doubts about his future in Manchester.

Bayern have already signed defender Lucas Hernandez from Atletico Madrid for 80m euros as they look to become more competitive in Europe, with their last Champions League win back in 2013. They also opted against making the Rodriguez' move from Real permanent after a two-year loan in Munich. Rodriguez scored 15 goals and set up another 20 in 67 matches in all competitions for Bayern but struggled to earn playing time under current coach Niko Kovac. The club said in a statement the 27-year-old had asked Bayern not to activate the buyout clause.

GRIEF

Johansson, father of Champions League, dies

AFP
Stockholm

Lennart Johansson, the former UEFA president acclaimed as father of the Champions League, has died aged 89, the Swedish football federation said yesterday. "Swedish football is in mourning. Lennart Johansson has died. He passed away on the evening of June 4 aged 89 after a short illness," the federation said.

Johansson's reign at the head of UEFA, European football's governing body, from 1990 to 2007, coincided with the birth of the Champions League, world football's biggest club tournament, and the transformation of football into a global business with wide appeal and income driven by TV revenue.

The announcement of the death of the large-than-life Johansson, well liked despite



his no-frills reputation, came just ahead of the opening of the FIFA Congress in Paris where delegates including president Gianni Infantino observed a minute's silence in his memory. Johansson last appeared in public at the Europa League final between Chelsea and Arsenal in Baku on May 29. He was expected at the Champions League final between Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur on June 1 in Madrid but was unable to attend.

Born on November 5, 1929 to a modest

family in the Stockholm suburb of Bromma, Johansson worked his way up from messenger boy to director of a building company. He launched his career as a sports administrator in the 1960s, becoming president of elite Swedish football club AIK, and then head of the Swedish football federation prior to his election as UEFA chief in 1990.

He never achieved his biggest ambition, however. In 1998, he was defeated by Sepp Blatter in his bid to become head of football's global federation FIFA. Under Johansson's watch at UEFA, the Champions League was born, replacing the old European Cup tournament and becoming the world's most prestigious club competition followed by millions of fans and bringing together the best players on the planet. He also presided over the growth of the European Football Championship, with the number of finalists doubling from eight to 16 under his watch.

ATHLETICS

Abdalla up against Amos, Kszczot in Rome Diamond League

Agencies
Rome

Qatar's Asian champion Abubaker Haydar Abdalla will line up at the IAAF Diamond League event in Rome today in the men's 800m event.

The 22-year-old had ran a personal best of 1:44.33 at the Asian Athletics Championships at Doha's Khalifa International Stadium in April this year, but slipped out of the top three with a time that was half a second outside his personal best in the Diamond League season-opener at the same venue 10 days later.

It was Botswana Nijel Amos who handed Emmanuel Korir his first ever defeat at an IAAF Diamond League meeting, when he won the event in a world-leading 1:44.29. Korir won't be in Rome, but Amos will still have to out-race Abdalla, world indoor champion Adam Kszczot, Olympic bronze medallist Clayton Murphy and his US compatriot Donovan Brazier.

Britain's Dina Asher-Smith

will be looking to continue her astonishing start to the season and build towards the world championships in Doha next September when she takes to the track for the women's 100m today.

Asher-Smith, the triple European champion, underlined her world title ambitions by leaving the reigning Olympic and world champions in her wake with a stunning 200m victory in Stockholm last week.

The 23-year-old British sprinter pulled away from 2016 double Olympic sprint champion Elaine Thompson to finish in 22.18sec, with the Jamaican trailing in her wake with 22.66 and former world champion Dafne Schippers way back in third in 22.78.

Thompson, 26, will be looking to hit back, along with Ivory Coast's Marie-Josée Ta Lou, a double 100m and 200m silver medallist at the 2017 worlds in London, who is making her first international appearance of the year.

"The world championships are a very long time away," said



Qatar's Abubaker Haydar Abdalla celebrates after winning the 800m race of the Asian Athletics Championships at Khalifa International Stadium in Doha on April 22, 2019. **PICTURE:** Noushad Thekkayil

Asher-Smith, looking towards the September 28-October 6 competition in Doha.

"While it's good to be in good shape now, it's important I stay

in good shape and continue to progress.

"I need to run faster by September because I know everyone else will too."

Two other Americans cannot be ruled out - Olympic 4x100 gold medallist English Gardner and Shanghai 100m winner Alicia Hobbs.

The men's 200m features a duel between Noah Lyles, winner of the past two Diamond League trophies over the distance, and fellow American Michael Norman, the 400m winner in Stockholm. One-lap sensation Norman equalled his personal record over 200m in Osaka, Japan on May 19 with 19.84.

World 200m champion Ramil Guliyev of Turkey will also line up in Rome, the fourth in the 14-leg Diamond League series with the final race in Brussels on September 6.

"Frankly I'm stunned by my times since the beginning of the season, I didn't think I could go fast, so early," Norman told AFP. "At the same time I have trained very well, continuously, without a hitch, with a lot of recovery to cope with this extended season," he added.

In the 400m hurdles American Raj Benjamin, who equalled Edwin Moses' historic 47.02 career best last year, will be in the spotlight.

Benjamin ran his Diamond League race in Shanghai, where he set the second best perform-

ance of his career with 47.80.

The line-up also features Ireland's Thomas Barr, the only rival in the Rome race to have dipped under 48 seconds, with the other US hurdler Kenny Selmon.

In the 1,500m, Ethiopian world record holder Genzebe Dibaba looks set for a duel with European champion Laura Muir of Scotland.

Dibaba won the Olympic silver medal in Rio, and the world title in Beijing 2015.

Muir has beaten Dibaba only once but she has remained unbeaten in the 1,500m since the European Championships in Berlin.

Also competing are American former world champion and Olympic bronze medallist Jenny Simpson, winner in Rome four years ago, and Shanghai winner Rababe Arafai from Morocco.

Czech two-time Olympic javelin champion Barbora Spotakova, 37, makes her first Diamond League appearance since winning the 2017 final, as she returns following the birth of her second child last year.

TENNIS/ FRENCH OPEN

Hope for Federer if he breaks Rafa's rhythm in semis

'Maybe out of necessity he's adopted these tactics which we all thought he should have adopted some time ago, but didn't because he was winning everything anyway'



Switzerland's Roger Federer reacts during his quarter-final match against Switzerland's Stanislas Wawrinka. (Right) Spain's Rafael Nadal celebrates after his quarter-final match against Japan's Kei Nishikori. (Reuters)

Reuters
Paris

Short of booting him in the shins at a change of ends, Roger Federer has used just about everything in his vast armoury to try and beat Rafael Nadal at the French Open - so he will need something different when they meet on the Parisian clay for the first time in eight years on Friday.

Five editions of arguably the sport's greatest rivalry have taken place on the Parisian claycourts, the first in 2005 when Nadal burst into the public consciousness by taking the title on his debut and the most recent in 2011. Each time Federer was beaten, unable to contain the marauding

Mallorcan whose left-handed topspin game tormented the Swiss great like no other player has ever managed.

There were passages of play in some of those matches when Federer appeared to have found the secret. He won the first set 6-1 in the 2006 final, only to fade away in four sets while a year later the opening two sets were also shared before Nadal stormed to victory. On one occasion, however, Federer was humiliated, winning only four games in the 2008 final - a few weeks before Nadal beat him in his "own back lawn" in the Wimbledon final.

It is eight long years and many Grand Slam titles between them since they last met at Roland Garros, which is why tomorrow's clash, the 39th time they have

met, is eagerly anticipated.

Federer said he must be "fearless" but what can he do to win three sets against the king of clay when in their previous French Open duels he has never won two?

Talking to Reuters, three-times French Open champion and Eurosport analyst Mats Wilander believes Fed fans have reason to be optimistic for tomorrow's showdown.

"Roger has clearly decided that he doesn't want to play Nadal the way he used to play him, which means 'I'm going to miss before you get a chance to get a rhythm,'" he said.

BASELINE PATTERN

"That's the key. With Roger he's so dominant that he never had to

play in a way to make the other guys worse, now he's figured out how to make Nadal's game worse."

Wilander believes Federer will adopt tactics Pete Sampras used to employ and play the match on his terms.

The Swede says Federer will gamble early in rallies. If he wins the point, great, if he loses it Nadal would have been deprived the kind of baseline pattern he thrives on.

"Take it early, hit it hard," Wilander said. "He's adopting a little bit of the Pete Sampras tactics, which I thought was 'I'm going to try for two points, and if you get 30-0 I'm not going to try any more, because I don't want you to get any rhythm, I'm going to throw it into the stands.

"Maybe out of necessity he's adopted these tactics which we all thought he should have adopted some time ago, but didn't because he was winning everything anyway?"

Nadal has been in frightening form since arriving at his old stomping ground, losing just one set, but then so has the 37-year-old Federer who, despite missing the last three French Opens, has played like he has never been away. Ever the innovator, Federer is perhaps a better player now than when he won his only French title in 2009.

His backhand is more explosive, his use of the drop shot has improved and he is even serving and volleying at times on clay.

He may not prevail, but expect something different tomorrow.

SPOTLIGHT

Roland Garros chiefs won't rule out finals shift after washout

AFP
Paris

Roland Garros organisers were facing a scheduling nightmare yesterday after the entire day's play was washed out with the prospect of another all-consuming deluge expected to swamp Paris tomorrow, possibly forcing the women's final to be played alongside the men's on Sunday.

Tournament director Guy Forget said he remained hopeful of the French Open finishing on time on Sunday.

However, if the weather continues to deteriorate, the women's final could be shifted from Saturday to Sunday, sharing top billing with the men's title match.

"We always have to study the worse case scenario," said Forget.

Yesterday was the second time since 2016 that all Roland Garros play was cancelled and third since 2000.

The decision left world number one Novak Djokovic and defending women's champion Simona Halep to play their quarter-finals on Thursday and semi-finals tomorrow if they get through.

With the women's final traditionally set for Saturday, third seed Halep could end up playing three days in a row.

"The weather for tomorrow seems to be OK but Friday is already looking complicated," added Forget.

Today's schedule has been brought forward by two hours to accommodate Halep's quarter-final against American teenager Amanda Anisimova and Djokovic's last-eight tie with Alexander Zverev on Court Philippe Chatrier.

On Court Suzanne Lenglen, America's Madison Keys was due to face Australia's Ashleigh Barty before 2018 runner-up Dominic Thiem clashed with Russia's Karen Khachanov.

Friday was originally set to stage both men's semi-finals for which Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer had already booked their places on Tuesday.

Johanna Konta and Marketa Vondrousova had been due to play their semi-final Thursday but that has already been shifted to Friday.

"We don't want to move the women's final from Saturday to Sunday but some girls may be playing three days in a row," said Forget.

"These girls have been waiting all of their lives to play such a match of this magnitude.

"If we have to move the finals to the following day it's something that could happen. We have done it with the men (Rafael Nadal v Djokovic final of 2012).

"It's not what we hope but if we have no other choice then that's what we will do."

Forget said it was possible that one of the women's matches could be moved away from the Chatrier and Lenglen courts to the 5,000-seater Simone Mathieu arena.

"You are always afraid that some players may think it's a lack of respect or we have diminished it.

"But we want to see players in the best possible condition and if we have to make the tough call to move players to a smaller court, it's a possibility," said Forget.

Djokovic has fallen foul of the weather in Paris before.

In the 2012 final against Nadal, he dropped the first two sets before winning the third and was 2-1 up in the fourth when play was suspended until Monday. But on the resumption, Nadal reimposed his authority and won in four sets for what was his seventh Roland Garros title.

In 2020, the French Open will be less affected by the vagaries of the weather as a retractable roof over Chatrier will come into operation.



A 2019 French Open tennis tournament official ball bounces on a cover as rain falls on day eleven of The Roland Garros 2019 French Open tennis tournament in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

TODAY'S ORDER OF PLAY

(play begins at 1000 GMT, prefix number denotes seeding):
COURT PHILIPPE CHATRIER
Women's singles - quarter-finals
3-Simona Halep (Romania) v Amanda Anisimova (US)
Men's singles - quarter-finals

1-Novak Djokovic (Serbia) v 5-Alexander Zverev (Germany)
Men's doubles - semi-finals
Jeremy Chardy (France)/Fabrice Martin (France) v 3-Juan Sebastian Cabal (Colombia)/Robert Farah (Colombia)
COURT SUZANNE LENGLEN
Women's singles - quarter-finals

14-Madison Keys (US) v 8-Ashleigh Barty (Australia)
Men's singles - quarter-finals
4-Dominic Thiem (Austria) v 10-Karen Khachanov (Russia)
Men's doubles - semi-finals
Kevin Krawietz (Germany)/Andreas Mies (Germany) v Guido Pella (Argentina)/Diego Schwartzman (Argentina)