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Raptors rip injury-hit Warriors to regain lead

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GULF TIMES SPORT



CRICKET

Coulter-Nile sparks Australia revival win over West Indies

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Qatar players line up prior to the start of their friendly international against Brazil on Wednesday night in Brasilia.

FOOTBALL

Neymar out of Copa after injury during Qatar match

RICHARLISON, JESUS SCORE FOR BRAZIL IN 2-0 VICTORY

AFP
Rio de Janeiro

Brazil star Neymar has been ruled out of the Copa America after tearing ankle ligaments during his country's 2-0 win over Qatar in a pre-tournament friendly, capping a troubled season for the world's most expensive player.

The injury to the Paris Saint-Germain player is a huge blow to host nation Brazil's preparations for the South American continental championship, which begins in just over a week's time.

A distraught-looking Neymar covered his face with his hands as he sat on the bench after hobbling from the field in the 20th minute at Brasilia's Mane Garrincha Stadium on Wednesday.

A large ice pack had been strapped to his lower right leg.

"Due to the seriousness of the injury, Neymar will neither be fit nor have time to recuperate sufficiently to participate" in the tournament, the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) said.

The injury comes just nine days before Brazil's opening Copa America game against Bolivia.

It caps a troubled season on and off the field for Neymar, who in the buildup to the match faced accusations that he raped a woman in a Paris hotel in May.

With Neymar ruled out, the host nation face an uphill battle to win South America's continental championship for the first time since 2007.

Ankle problems ruled him out of the second half of the just-completed Ligue 1 season in France. When he did finally return to the team, he played as PSG suffered a shock defeat to Rennes in the French Cup final and then lashed out at a supporter in the stands



With his right leg covered by an ice pack, Neymar is helped off the ground by team staff on Wednesday night in Brasilia. According to the Brazilian Football Federation, he doesn't have time to "recuperate sufficiently to participate" in the Copa America.

afterwards. In a sign of how significant a figure Neymar remains in Brazilian life, the country's far-right President Jair Bolsonaro offered his public backing for the player ahead of the match.

"He's going through a difficult moment but I believe him," said Bolsonaro. At a news conference Monday, national coach Tite was bombarded with questions about effect of the affair on the squad.

Attempting to sidestep the issue, Tite said he would "not judge" Neymar, who he said was "indispensable" to the team.

In the match, two Premier

League-based players, Richarlison and Gabriel Jesus, scored Brazil's goals in the first half. Qatar had a chance to pull a goal back in the 96th minute after the referee penalised Ederson for a mistimed challenge following a VAR review, however, Boualem Khoukhi's spot-kick cannonned against the crossbar.

It was a lively first half in Brasilia, where two goals were scored, a penalty was overturned by the VAR and Neymar left the pitch in tears. The maroons had won seven successive matches heading into the friendly but the Copa

America guests were completely outplayed as Brazil hit the front in the 16th minute. Dani Alves picked out Richarlison, who rose highest to head past Saad al-Sheeb for his fourth international goal.

Neymar, who was seen crying on the sidelines, was forced from the ground shortly afterwards and replaced by Everton.

That did not hamper Brazil, who doubled their lead eight minutes later through Jesus following some neat combination play with Richarlison.

Brazil will finalise their Copa America preparations at home to

Sanchez praises Qatar performance

Qatar coach **Felix Sanchez** praised Qatar for putting up a spirited performance against Brazil in their international friendly on Wednesday. He said the Al Anabi acquitted themselves well against the five-times world champions which had stars such as Neymar, Dani Alves, Gabriel Jesus and others in their ranks.

"This game was very important for us as because it was part of our preparations for the Copa America. Also in the long run it is important because we are getting ready to play in the FIFA World Cup in Qatar in 2022," he added.

The Spaniard said that the



players coped well with the pressure of playing the Samba Kings.

"We managed to keep up with the Brazilian team for most of the first half. And in the second half they really played very well. Sanchez, who guided Qatar to their first-ever Asian Cup title earlier this year, said the experience of playing Brazil will help the players no end. "The Qatari players have gained a lot of experience from this encounter, which will give them a boost in the upcoming matches in the Copa America, where we will play in a very difficult group." Sanchez concluded his remarks and wished the speedy recovery of Brazilian star Neymar after he suffered an injury during the match.



Qatar goalkeeper Saad al-Sheeb makes a save against Brazil in Brasilia.

Honduras on Sunday before opening the tournament against Bolivia

on June 14. Qatar, meanwhile, will not play again until they face Para-

guay (June 16) in Copa America action.



REPORT

Coulter-Nile sparks Aussie revival win over West Indies

No. 8's 92 helps Australia to 288 before Starc scalps five wickets for 15-run victory



Australia's Nathan Coulter-Nile (right) hits a boundary during the 2019 ICC Cricket World Cup match against West Indies at Trent Bridge in Nottingham, Britain, yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP
Nottingham, United Kingdom

Nathan Coulter-Nile's record-breaking innings laid the platform for Australia's 15-run victory over the West Indies yesterday as the World Cup holders bounced back from a top-order collapse to make it two successive wins.

Australia were in dire straits at 38 for four after the West Indies fast bowlers proved too hot to handle early on at Trent Bridge.

But Coulter-Nile's career-best 92 – the highest score by any number eight batsman or lower in a World Cup – helped take them to 288 all out.

He carried on a recovery started by former skipper Steve Smith (73), with the pair bailing Australia out in a stand of 102 in 89 balls.

West Indies, despite a pain-taking 68 from opener Shai Hope and 51 from captain Jason Holder finished on 273 for nine.

Fast bowler Mitchell Starc did the bulk of the damage with five for 46 – the first five-wicket haul of this World Cup – including a late burst of four for two in 11 balls – as Australia followed up their seven-wicket win over minnows Afghanistan.

"We just kept hanging in there. We were able to fight back through Alex Carey and Steve Smith. Then for Nathan Coulter-Nile to play the way he did was exceptional," Australia captain Aaron Finch said.

"I absolutely was nervous. Once the West Indies batsmen get set they are so destructive and can hit it to all parts.

"You have to try and stall their



Australia's Mitchell Starc (left) shakes hands with West Indies' Jason Holder at the end of the match yesterday. (Reuters)

momentum and get them to take risks. It came off today but we still need to work on things."

Holder added: "I thought we were well in the game, just a few irresponsible shots when we probably needed to tap it around a bit more.

"To get Australia to 288 we would have taken that, I just think the batters need to take responsibility. We still believe we can win this competition, it's wide open."

The West Indies had bounced out Pakistan for just 105 when winning their tournament opener at Trent Bridge last week and adopted similar tactics against Australia after Holder won the toss.

COULTER-NILE CASHES IN
Oshane Thomas had Finch (six) caught before opening partner David Warner (three) was held at backward point off Sheldon

Cottrell – a wicket that saw the left-arm quick, still a member of the Jamaica Defence Force, celebrate with his trademark salute.

Australia were now 26 for two, with boos ringing out as Warner walked off and Smith walked on – a now familiar response by crowds in England to the pair having only recently returned from year-long bans for their roles in a ball-tampering scandal in South Africa.

Smith had a lucky break on 26 when he top-edged a hook off Holder only for Cottrell at long leg to slip as he eyed a catch.

His patient innings ended when he flicked Thomas high towards deep backward square only for Cottrell, skirting the boundary, to grab the ball one-handed, throw it back into the field of play as he stepped over the rope – thereby avoiding a six – and complete a sensational catch.

AUSTRALIA		WEST INDIES	
D. Warner c Hetmyer b Cottrell	3	C. Gayle lbw b Starc	21
A. Finch c Hope b Thomas	6	E. Lewis c Smith b Cummins	1
U. Khawaja c Hope b Russell	13	S. Hope c Khawaja b Cummins	68
S. Smith c Cottrell b Thomas	73	N. Pooran c Finch b Zampa	40
G. Maxwell c Hope b Cottrell	0	S. Hetmyer run out	21
M. Stoinis c Pooran b Holder	19	J. Holder c Zampa b Starc	51
A. Carey c Hope b Russell	45	A. Russell c Maxwell b Starc	15
N. Coulter-Nile c Holder b Brathwaite	92	C. Brathwaite c Finch b Starc	16
P. Cummins c Cottrell b Brathwaite	2	A. Nurse not out	19
M. Starc c Holder b Brathwaite	8	S. Cottrell b Starc	1
A. Zampa not out	0	O. Thomas not out	0
Extras (b1, lb1, w24, nb1)	27	Extras (lb9, w11)	20
Total (all out, 49 overs)	288	Total (nine wickets, 50 overs)	273
Fall of wickets: 1-15 (Finch), 2-26 (Warner), 3-36 (Khawaja), 4-38 (Maxwell), 5-79 (Stoinis), 6-147 (Carey), 7-249 (Smith), 8-268 (Cummins), 9-284 (Coulter-Nile), 10-288 (Starc)		Bowling: Starc 10-1-46-5 (4w), Cummins 10-3-41-2 (3w), Coulter-Nile 10-0-70-0, Maxwell 6-1-31-0, Zampa 10-0-58-1, Stoinis 4-0-18-0	
Bowling: Thomas 10-0-63-2 (1nb, 8w), Cottrell 9-0-56-2 (3w), Russell 8-0-41-2 (5w), Brathwaite 10-0-67-3 (2w), Holder 7-2-28-1, Nurse 5-0-31-0 (2w)		RESULT: Australia won by 15 runs	

But Coulter-Nile cashed in as he surpassed his previous international best of 34.

His blistering assault off 60 balls featuring eight fours and four sixes also saw him beat former Zimbabwe international Heath Streak's previous World Cup best by a No 8 of 72 before, in sight of a hundred, he drove Carlos Brathwaite to Holder at long-off.

In the West Indies' run-chase, big-hitting opener Chris

Gayle, having overturned two 'out' decisions, was eventually lbw to Starc for 21.

But Hope, bidding his time, completed a 76-ball fifty.

Holder who overturned decisions against him on seven and 22, upped the tempo with several well-struck boundaries.

West Indies, however, suffered a huge setback when Hope chipped a Pat Cummins slower ball to mid-on, setting the stage for Starc's demolition job.

FOCUS

Batting, fielding cost Bangladesh against Kiwis, says Mashrafe

Reuters
London

Bangladesh paid the price for a below-par batting performance and made errors in the field at key moments during their two-wicket defeat by New Zealand at the World Cup on Wednesday, their captain Mashrafe Mortaza has said.

Bangladesh failed to build on Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiqur Rahim's 50-run partnership, losing wickets regularly to set a New Zealand target of 245 at the Oval, and Mashrafe said his men fell at least 20 runs short of a defensible total.

"If we could have managed to score 20 to 30 runs more than we did it would have been different," he told reporters. "We were very close, a few runs short but very close."

New Zealand put themselves under pressure by losing six wickets in quick succession to give Mashrafe hope, but the contest was ultimately decided by Bangladesh's failure to take their chances in the field.

Kane Williamson should have been run out for eight, but the Kiwi skipper was relieved by wicketkeeper Mushfiqur, who dislodged the bails with his arm,

and went on to build a 105-run partnership with Ross Taylor that put New Zealand in control.

Mashrafe refused to criticise Mushfiqur for his mistake but was left ruing the missed opportunity.

"If you don't score big you have to take all your chances," he added. "Mushi, I don't think we need to go after him. It could happen to anybody because he was also trying hard to get him."

"He wants to pick the ball and suddenly it hits his elbow. Those sort of mistakes always happen on the ground."

The result leaves Bangladesh sixth in the standings ahead of their next match against England in Cardiff tomorrow.

Former ODI spinner Abdur Razzak said his countrymen would not be daunted by the prospect of facing the favourites given their World Cup record against England, who Bangladesh beat at the 2011 and 2015 editions of the tournament.

"These are different teams... but there is a lot of confidence from those wins," Razzak wrote in a column for the International Cricket Council.

"(Bangladesh) may not necessarily win but they will certainly give them a good game. England have more pressure... and we've beaten them in our last two World Cup matches."



New Zealand's Mitchell Santner (right) and teammate Lockie Ferguson celebrate after their win in the 2019 Cricket World Cup match against Bangladesh at The Oval in London on Wednesday. (AFP)

SPOTLIGHT

Selectors right to reject De Villiers for World Cup: convenor

AFP
Johannesburg

South African selection convenor Linda Zondi said yesterday he was "shocked" when told that batting star **AB de Villiers** had made himself available for the World Cup.

Zondi said he was informed on the day of the squad announcement in April by captain Faf du Plessis and coach Ottis Gibson that De Villiers had said he was willing to come out of retirement.

Zondi said it would not have been morally right to include De Villiers.

"I pleaded with AB de Villiers not to retire in 2018... I did give him the option to plan and monitor his season to get him to the World Cup fresh and in a good space," said Zondi.

"He turned down the offer and said he was at peace with his decision to retire."

Zondi said it would be unfair to

other players to accede to De Villiers' belated request.

"The decision was based on principle; we had to be fair to the team, the selection panel, our franchise system and players."

De Villiers surprised South African officials when he made an announcement on social media last year that he was retiring from international cricket following a successful comeback in a Test series against Australia.

"For Faf du Plessis and Ottis Gibson to share AB's desire to be included in the squad on the day we announced our World Cup squad on April 18 was a shock to all of us," said Zondi.

"At no point in the year that he had retired did he make himself available for selection. It was no option when I received the news on the day of the squad announcement, our squad was finalised and confirmed. AB is undoubtedly one of the best players in the world, but above all else, we have to stay true to our morals and principles, there is no regret in the decision."



Pietersen's golden words for right-handers to tackle India's Bumrah

IAN S
New Delhi

Former England batsman Kevin Pietersen has offered a piece of advice to all batters, especially right-handers – to help tackle Indian fast bowling spearhead and ICC world no 1 **Jasprit Bumrah** during the ongoing edition of the World Cup. The key for the right-handed batsman while facing Bumrah is to take an off-stump guard, and try and hit him between straight down the

pitch and square leg, Pietersen took to Twitter to help the batters in the showpiece event.

"Quick memo to all right handed batters – get onto off stump against Bumrah and look to hit him from, straight back at the stumps to square leg. Eliminate the off side completely!" tweeted Pietersen.

In the opening World Cup game against South Africa, Bumrah was once again at his menacing best as he scalped two wickets and broke the back of the Proteas top-order. His figures of 2/35 along with Yuzvendra

Chahal's 4 for 51, helped India restrict Proteas to 227 which the Men in Blue chased down with six wickets in hand at the Ageas Bowl on Wednesday.

Bumrah, 25, has so far taken 87 wickets in 50 matches he has played at an average of 22.0 and strike rate of 29.5. Since his ODI debut, no bowler has taken more wickets in death overs than Bumrah's 44.

India will face Australia in their next World Cup encounter on Sunday and the onus will once again be on Bumrah to take the Men in Blue off to a good start with the ball.





FOCUS

Pressure-free Pakistan ready to deliver against Sri Lanka

'The guys got over that (nerves) against England and showed their proper skills. It was a true test of character'

Agencies
Bristol, England

Pakistan's stunning victory over World Cup favourites England has eased the pressure on Sarfaraz Ahmed's squad before today's potentially tricky test against Sri Lanka at Bristol, batting coach Grant Flower said yesterday.

After a crushing seven-wicket defeat by West Indies in their tournament opener, former champions Pakistan beat hosts England by 14 runs in a high-scoring contest at Trent Bridge on Monday to get their campaign back on track.

Having come into the World Cup on the back of a 4-0 series hammering by England, which was followed by a warm-up defeat by minnows Afghanistan, Flower said that downing Eoin Morgan's men had helped settle the nerves in the dressing room.

"I definitely do sense a bit of confidence... since we've won. It took off a lot of the pressure definitely, having gone through that string of defeats," Flower told a news conference.

"Psychologically, that lifts a weight from their shoulders. And to score (close to) 350 against a very good England attack, the guys are relieved.

"We didn't adapt well to conditions against West Indies... there were nerves... the guys got over that against England and showed their proper skills. It was a true test of character and they came through with flying colours in the second game."

Sri Lanka have made a similarly patchy start, capitulating to New Zealand before seeing off a determined Afghanistan in a thriller. Flower said Dimuth Karunaratne's team cannot be taken lightly.

"You have always got to be respectful and they have got good bowlers. I have just come out of a batting meeting to see their skills. And it should be a good game," former Zimbabwe batsman Flower added.

"Hopefully the weather stays away. It's a bit poor, the forecast. But I don't think we'd be targeting any one individual though they have got some good seamers and some spinners with very good skills."

STAY 'RUTHLESS'

Pakistan coach Mickey Arthur



Pakistan captain Sarfaraz Ahmed (second from left) leads his team off of the pitch after winning the 2019 ICC Cricket World Cup match against England at Trent Bridge in Nottingham, England, on Monday. (AFP)

Pakistan's Babar tipped as World Cup star in the making

AFP
Bristol, United Kingdom

Pakistan batting coach Grant Flower has tipped gifted youngster **Babar Azam** to emerge as one of the best batsmen at the World Cup. Babar showed his vast potential by smashing 63 from 66 balls to lead the Pakistan assault as they piled on 348-8 in their shock win over tournament favourites England on Monday. The 24-year-old has already made an impact since his debut in 2016, having scored 2,824 runs in 66 one-day internationals at an impressive average of 51.34. But he can underline his quali-

ties in front of a global audience if he continues to shine at the World Cup in England and Wales.

Flower believes Pakistan's batting will continue to flourish after a nervy start in their World Cup opener against the West Indies. Babar is likely to hold the key to their hopes of a successful campaign and, speaking ahead of today's match against Sri Lanka in Bristol, Flower said: "Babar has come a long way. His game is improving all the time.

"He's going to develop even more, close to being at the top of his game, he is really exciting and he is going to be one of the best players in the world."



Arthur told AFP.

"When we put all three disciplines together we know we can beat anybody. We now need to

stay consistent and ruthless."

Pakistan posted an impressive 348-8 against a potent England bowling attack, with fifties from veteran Mohamed Hafeez, Babar Azam and Sarfaraz Ahmed.

Pacemen Wahab Riaz and Mohamed Amir, and leg-spinner Shadab Khan, took the wickets to restrict England to 334-9 in their 50 overs.

"You could see the hunger, the determination and the resolve to do well in batting after a horror show and then the bowlers fought hard, so we need to repeat that in the coming matches as well," said Arthur.

Pakistan have won all seven of their World Cup matches against Sri Lanka dating back to the first tournament in 1975.

Pakistan will be tempted to bring in fast bowler Mohamed Hasnain for his raw pace, something that New Zealand exploited against Sri Lanka during their 10-wicket rout of their opponents in Cardiff on Saturday.

Karunaratne unfazed by Sri Lanka's World Cup woe against Pakistan

AFP
Bristol, United Kingdom

Dimuth Karunaratne insists Sri Lanka can end their wretched World Cup record against Pakistan when they clash in Bristol today.

Pakistan have won all seven World Cup encounters against Sri Lanka dating back to the inaugural World Cup in 1975. But Sri Lanka are optimistic after recovering from a crushing 10-wicket defeat in their opening match against New Zealand.

A hard-earned 34-run win against minnows Afghanistan lifted Sri Lankan spirits, although Karunaratne acknowledges they still have room for improvement.

The next test for the 1996 champions comes against an unpredictable Pakistan side who were bowled out for 105 in their opening seven-wicket defeat against the West Indies before a shock 14-run victory against hosts and tournament favourites England.

Asked yesterday if Sri Lanka's past struggles against Pakistan could be a mental barrier, captain Karunaratne told reporters: "We may not have won against Pakistan in the World Cup but it doesn't bother us.

"It's just another one-day international for us so if we perform well on that day we

can win."

Karunaratne admitted his team were low on confidence after being shot out for 136 by New Zealand, but he believes they have more than enough talent to see off Pakistan. "Pakistan is an unpredictable team but we are also coming into this game having won one and lost one. We were low in confidence but we will give our best shot out to beat them," he said.

Sri Lanka will have to guard against another middle-order collapse, which derailed their good starts in both the matches, a weakness Karunaratne hopes will be addressed.

"We have some areas to improve in batting," said Karunaratne, whose team slumped from 144-1 to 201 all out against Afghanistan.

"We need to focus on those things and make sure it does not happen in the Pakistan match. But the win has, overall, boosted our confidence." Karunaratne also gave his backing to veteran Angelo Mathews, who has been dismissed without scoring in both World Cup games.

"He is a cricketer with a lot of experience and has faced similar kind of situations on a number of times so I don't think it will be a problem for him to come out of it," Karunaratne said.

Sri Lanka are likely to bring in all-rounder Jeevan Mendis into the team today.



Sri Lanka captain Dimuth Karunaratne (left) and teammates celebrate an Afghanistan wicket during match on Tuesday. (AFP)

BOTTOMLINE

Rohit's ton will ease pressure on Kohli, says Srikanth

Reuters
Mumbai

Rohit Sharma's unbeaten century in India's Cricket World Cup opener against South Africa augured well for the team and will help take some pressure off captain Virat Kohli, former opening batsman Krishnamachari Srikkanth has said.

Chasing South Africa's 227-9, India lost opener Shikhar Dhawan for eight and then batting mainstay Kohli for 18 with the score on 54-2 at the Rose bowl in Southampton.

Opener Rohit, however, ensured the victory ended up being a comfortable one with an unbeaten 122 as India reached their target with six wickets in hand and 15 balls to spare.

"Rohit Sharma's return to form is the biggest positive for India after the first game of the tournament," Srikkanth said in a column for the International Cricket Council.

"Opening batsmen are crucial at the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup and Sharma more than anyone has that ability to turn it on. He can go from first gear to fourth gear in an instant and just kick on from there and keep clicking through the gears.

"For India, having someone who can go and get not just hundreds but even double hundreds is a major asset and also relieves the pressure on Virat Kohli a little."



India captain Virat Kohli (left) congratulates teammate Rohit Sharma (also right) after India's win over South Africa on Wednesday. (AFP)

Rohit, 32, owns the highest one-day international score of 264 and also has two other innings of over 200 under his belt in the format.

He had scored two and 19 in the warm-up games against New Zealand and Bangladesh respectively and had to knuckle down at the start of his innings against some inspired fast bowling from South Africa duo Kagiso Rabada and Chris Morris.

"The trio of Shikhar Dhawan, Sharma and Kohli will be crucial to India's chances so it is a great sign that Sharma got a hundred and saw them over the line," Srikkanth, who was part of India's 1983 World Cup-winning side, said.

"He did not need to ramp it up against South Africa, who had not scored enough runs in Southampton, but that knock will do him a lot of good."

Rohit added 85 for the third wicket with Lokesh Rahul, who made 26, and another 74 for the fourth with Mahendra Singh Dhoni to help India overcome the early loss of wickets.

"I think it is true in all formats that partnerships win matches," said Srikkanth, who has also served as India's chief selector in the past.

"You cannot rely on the individuals, and that was very impressive from India to see significant partnerships from a few players."



NATIONS LEAGUE

'Genius' Ronaldo hat-trick sends Portugal into final

Ronaldo strikes twice in the final two minutes to set up a clash with England or Dutch



Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates after scoring against Switzerland during the UEFA Nations League semi-final at the Dragao stadium in Porto on Wednesday night. (AFP)

AFP
Porto, Portugal

Portugal manager Fernando Santos hailed Cristiano Ronaldo a 'football genius' after his 53rd career hat-trick sent Portugal into the final of the Nations League on home soil in Porto with a 3-1 win over Switzerland.

The hosts had to withstand a huge moment of VAR controversy as after Ronaldo's free-kick opened the scoring, Portugal thought they had the chance to double their lead from the penalty spot. Instead German referee Felix Brych reversed his initial decision and awarded a spot-kick at the other end for an earlier incident, which Ricardo Rodriguez converted to seemingly send the game to extra-time.

However, Ronaldo predictably took centre stage as he struck twice in the final two minutes to set up a clash with England or the Netherlands, who were meeting in the second semi-final late last night, in Sunday's final.

"I was his coach in 2003 and I could see where he'd go," said Santos. "He's a genius. There's genius paintings and sculptures and he's a football genius!"

Portugal made it to the last four without their all-time record goalscorer as Ronaldo took a hiatus from international football to concentrate on his first season at Juventus. However, the five-time Ballon d'Or winner returned to the national team in March and was always likely to be the centre of attention, particularly on a day when it was reported a rape lawsuit against him had been dropped.

A lawyer for the American woman who claimed she was sexually assaulted by Ronaldo — accusations he has strongly denied — later dismissed that report, saying the case had not been dropped. In front of an adoring home crowd, Ronaldo put the spotlight back on his performance on the pitch as he opened the scoring with a brilliant free-kick.

The Portugal captain is however no longer his country's only star name, with Bernardo Silva starring for Manchester City where he could soon be joined by Joao

Felix. City are reportedly set to pay Felix's 120-million-euro (\$135mm) buyout clause from Benfica, but the 19-year-old missed a glaring chance to mark his international debut with a goal just before the break as he blasted over from Ronaldo's pass.

Switzerland had posed a threat themselves in the first half with Xherdan Shaqiri, fresh from winning the Champions League with Liverpool, particularly lively. However, it took the help of VAR to get them back in the game just before the hour mark.

Brych had waved away appeals for a foul by Nelson Semedo on Steven Zuber before awarding Portugal a penalty as play broke down at the other end, but overturned his initial decision. Rodriguez drilled home the resultant spot-kick much to the fury of the home supporters at the Estadio do Dragao.

The Swiss could then have gone in front when Benfica forward Haris Seferovic headed just wide. By contrast, Portugal had one of the deadliest finishers in football history on the end of their chances.

"Congratulations to Portugal. They

were street smarts, they had the cherry on top of the cake and that made the difference. Four shots, three goals," said Switzerland coach Vladimir Petkovic.

Silva was the creator for Ronaldo to drill home his second of the night two minutes from time. Moments later the hosts sealed their place in the final on the counter-attack as Ronaldo curled into the far corner for his 88th international goal.

PORTUGAL'S PEPE OUT OF NATIONS LEAGUE FINAL

Meanwhile, Portugal will be without veteran centre-back Pepe as they aim to lift the first ever Nations League title on home soil on Sunday. The Porto defender fractured a shoulder blade against Switzerland on Wednesday. "The player suffered a fractured shoulder blade during the Portugal-Switzerland match," said the Portuguese Federation.

The 36-year-old picked up the injury after falling awkwardly as he attacked a corner just after the hour mark. Lille's Jose Fonte replaced Pepe on the night and is expected to take his place for the final.

TRANSFER

Real Madrid agree deal to sign Chelsea's Hazard: reports

AFP
London

Real Madrid have agreed a blockbuster deal to sign Chelsea winger Eden Hazard for a fee of up to £130m (\$165m), according to British media reports yesterday. Hazard is Real's top transfer target as the Spanish club rebuild after a dismal season and the Belgium star appears set to complete his move to the Bernabeu in the next few days.

A Daily Telegraph report said Real and Chelsea came to an agreement over the terms of the deal yesterday after several days of negotiations. Real had originally offered around £88m, but it is claimed the final fee could rise as high as £130m when all the bonus payments are included.

The basic fee for Hazard is expected to reach £100m, the sum for which Chelsea had been holding out despite the 28-year-old entering the final year of his Stamford Bridge contract. Hazard is on the verge of leaving Chelsea after seven years, having won two Premier League titles, two Europa League crowns, one FA Cup and one League Cup.

He scored twice in Chelsea's 4-1 Europa League final win over Arsenal in Baku last month, then immediately admitted he expected his time at Stamford Bridge to come to an end. Hazard has been hoping for a move to Real for over a year, with Chelsea blocking his attempt to leave



last year before the Blues finally accepted his wish in the closing weeks of the season.

Speaking after the Europa League final, Hazard had said: "I think it's a goodbye. My dream was to play in the Premier League, I did it for seven years. Maybe it's time for a new challenge."

Hazard joined Chelsea from Lille in 2012, and in his final campaign at Stamford Bridge he became just the fourth man in Premier League history to score 15 goals and make 15 assists in a season. Chelsea have been resigned to losing Hazard since he rejected all offers of a contract extension and has been the subject of flattering comments from Real manager Zinedine Zidane in recent months.

SPOTLIGHT

Man City appeal possible Champions League ban

AFP
Lausanne

Manchester City have launched a legal bid to stop UEFA banning them from the 2020-2021 Champions League, the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) said yesterday. Abu Dhabi-owned City, who retained the Premier League title this season, are in danger of being kicked out of future editions of the Champions League after UEFA looked into reported Financial Fair Play breaches.

The investigation was triggered by European football's governing body in March after claims City had hidden revenue from overvalued commercial deals in order to meet the UEFA spending guidelines. According to the Lausanne-based CAS the Premier League champions have now filed an appeal with the court ahead of an imminent sentencing decision from UEFA's Club Financial Control Body's (CFCB) adjudicatory chamber.

CAS said it was involved in establishing a procedural calen-

dar and that it was unable as yet to say when the matter would be settled. It is believed the committee is unlikely to rule against the conclusions of chief investigator Yves Leterme, who signed over his probe into alleged payments deception two weeks ago and is thought to have recommended that City be banned from the Champions League.

The decision would leave Pep Guardiola's side out of Europe's elite club competition, potentially for the 2020-21 campaign. But City are believed to be challenging UEFA's right to send the case to their adjudicatory chamber and its competence to judge on the club at all.

City did not respond to a request for comment, but the club have previously said the referral to the judicial branch "ignores a comprehensive body of irrefutable evidence provided by Manchester City". City, who added the FA Cup and League Cup this season for an unprecedented domestic treble, also said the allegations of wrongdoing were "entirely false" and there is "comprehensive proof" otherwise.

FOCUS

QFA chief meets Brazilian president



Qatar Football Association President Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani (second right) poses with Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro (second left) in Brasilia on Wednesday.

Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani, President of the Qatar Football Association (QFA), exchanged souvenirs with Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro before the international friendly on Wednesday night.

Brazil hosted Qatar in the friendly which was won by the latter 2-0 after an entertaining clash.

HE Ibrahim al-Abdullah, Ambassador of the State of Qatar to Brazil, was also present. The QFA President wished Brazil success in qualifying

for the 2022 FIFA World Cup to be played in Qatar.

The Brazilian President thanked the Qatar delegation for the visit and the wishes. Brazil staged the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games two years later.

ROUND-UP

CAF president questioned by French authorities over corruption allegations

The president of the Confederation of African Football (CAF) Ahmad Ahmad was questioned yesterday by French investigators, a source close to the probe said, reportedly concerning a breach of contract with Puma.

The source confirmed reports by France Afrique magazine that Ahmad was being questioned by France's white collar crime investigation body, but did not say what the investigation was about. Jeune Afrique said Ahmad was asked about allegations that CAF unilaterally broke a contract with German sports merchandise giant Puma, before signing a merchandise deal with a French supplier.

In a statement, FIFA said it had "taken note of the alleged events concerning Mr Ahmad Ahmad, who is being questioned by the French authorities in relation to allegations related to his mandate while President of CAF."

World football's governing body said it was "unaware of the details surrounding this investigation." Ahmad was in Paris for the FIFA Congress that was held on Wednesday, in which



Gianni Infantino was re-elected for a second term as president after standing unopposed. The event took place two days before France kick off the Women's World Cup against South Korea at the Parc des Princes today.

US BILLIONAIRE COMMISSO BUYS ITALIAN CLUB FIORENTINA

Italian-American media magnate Rocco Commisso on Thursday completed the takeover of Serie A team Fiorentina, the Italian club announced. Reported to be worth in the region of 170m euros (\$190m), the deal brings an end to the 17-year ownership of the Della Valle family.

The 69-year-old Commisso is

chairman of cable television provider Mediaset group, and owns New York Cosmos soccer club. He had in recent years tried to buy AC Milan. Born in Calabria in southern Italy he moved to the United States in 1962 with his mother and two sisters, to join his father and brother who had moved there six years earlier.

The Della Valle family, which includes entrepreneur Diego Della Valle, who controls luxury group Tod's, purchased the Tuscan-based club in 2002 after the former two-time Serie A winners went bankrupt and were relegated. Fiorentina — Italian champions in 1956 and 1969 — finished 16th last season, avoiding relegation on the final day of the season. Their last trophy was a sixth Coppa Italia in 2001.

Fiorentina are the latest Italian club to move into foreign ownership. Roma are already owned by US businessman James Pallotta and AC Milan are controlled by American hedge fund Elliott. Canadian businessman Joey Saputo is the majority shareholder of Bologna while Inter Milan are in the hands of Chinese firm Suning Group.

NBA

Raptors rip injury-hit Warriors to regain lead

'It feels good. Just happy to get a game-three win and move us one step closer to our goal'

AFP
Oakland, United States

U pstart Toronto moved halfway to a first-ever title Wednesday with Kawhi Leonard scoring 30 points to lead the Raptors over the injury-hit Golden State Warriors 123-109 in the NBA Finals.

Kyle Lowry added 23 points and nine assists while Danny Green and Pascal Siakam each contributed 18 points as the Raptors seized a 2-1 lead in the best-of-seven series, which continues Friday in Oakland.

"It feels good," Leonard said. "Just happy to get a game-three win and move us one step closer to our goal."

Stephen Curry scored a career playoff high 47 points and added eight rebounds and seven assists for a defending champion Golden State squad playing without guard Klay Thompson due to a left hamstring strain and forward Kevin Durant with a right calf injury.

"Steph was unbelievable," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "He does things I don't think anybody has done before. He's amazing."

Green started 6-of-8 from 3-point range, sparking a late third-quarter run that gave Toronto momentum for good.

"Danny's buckets I think boosted our whole team's confidence because we're used to most of the year relying on those," Raptors coach Nick Nurse said.

Golden State fell behind by as many as 14 points in the first half and pulled no closer than seven in the second half despite staying within reach thanks to Curry's one-man heroics.

"We answered a lot of runs, down to seven a bunch, and came back and scored a bucket or hit a three or whatever," Nurse said. "Each time they chipped we answered back and that's what you got to do if you're going to keep your lead."

The Warriors seek a third straight crown and their fourth in five seasons while the Raptors are in the first finals of their 24-season history. "We've got to continue to work and play hard," Lowry said. "The guys were on me to be aggressive and I did play more aggressive in this atmosphere. It meant a lot."

Golden State decided just before tip-off to bench Thompson, a

five-time NBA All-Star who averages 19.5 points. The team feared he could injure himself worse and miss more games, hoping a game's rest - even one that snapped his run of 120 career playoff games without a miss - would ensure his health the rest of the way.

"The whole point was to not risk a bigger injury," Kerr said. "We live with that decision. He's got another couple days to heal. Hopefully he'll be out there Friday."

The Warriors can't afford to lose another player with Kevin Durant, averaging 34.2 points, uncertain for game four, and forward Kevon Looney out for the remainder of the finals with a chest injury.

Curry scored 25 first-half points, a career high for any finals half, but the Raptors led 60-52 at half-time, Toronto double-teaming the 3-point sharpshooter while his supporting cast struggled to equal his total.

The Raptors matched their biggest first-half lead at 66-52 early in the third quarter, but Curry had nine points and Andre Iguodala added eight in a 19-12 Warriors run to pull within 78-71.

Green answered with back-to-back 3-pointers and closed a 13-5 Raptors run with another to give the visitors their biggest lead of the first three quarters at 96-80. Curry hit four free throws in a 9-0 run as Golden State pulled within 96-89.

WARRIORS DEFENSE LACKING

But Lowry answered for Toronto by scoring nine points in a 15-5 run that gave the Raptors their largest lead to that point at 111-94 with 5:42 remaining and the Warriors' final hopes faded.

"Toronto made big shots every time they need to," Kerr said. "And we couldn't get over the hump. We have to play better defense out there."

The Warriors, playing their first home game in 20 days, struggled from the start.

"They outplayed us," Kerr said. "Now we just got to bounce back and get back in here Friday and hopefully get a little healthier and get some guys back, but we'll see how that goes."

The Warriors scored 109 points for the third game in a row.

"I just knew we were going to score 109 points because that's all we're going to do the rest of this series," Kerr said. "So if we're going to keep scoring 109, we got to keep them to 108."



Toronto Raptors forward Kawhi Leonard shoots the ball against Golden State Warriors centre Andrew Bogut in game three of the 2019 NBA Finals at Oracle Arena. **PICTURE:** USA TODAY Sports

SPOTLIGHT

Mavs' Cuban enjoys when Lakers are in trouble

Reuters
Los Angeles

D allas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban told ESPN on Wednesday he takes delight in the plights of the Los Angeles Lakers, who have followed a tumultuous season with more than a few negative headlines this offseason.

"The more screwed up they are, the happier I am," Cuban told ESPN while he was in downtown LA for the Social Innovation Summit.

"But I feel that way about every other franchise not in Dallas. We all go through it. Every franchise goes through cycles, and when your down cycle hits you, it's never fun."

Despite that sentiment, Cuban said he supports Lakers controlling owner Jeanie Buss.

"I feel bad for Jeanie, personally, because she's a great person," he told ESPN.

"I have no sympathy for the Lakers any more than they had sympathy for us."

Cuban also expressed disapproval of former team president Magic Johnson's claim last month that he would be interested in buying the Lakers.

"That's a little bit self-serving," Cuban said. "I don't think Magic could afford them. And that's no disrespect to Magic. That's a reflection of just how well Jeanie has done."

Johnson resigned from his position - without warning anyone, including Buss, a close friend of his - on April 9, minutes before the team's regular-season finale. In mid-May, he accused general manager Rob Pelinka, who remains in his position, of backstabbing him.

Last week, a lengthy ESPN story described a toxic culture in the Lakers organisation during Johnson's tenure. Johnson denied mistreating any employees.

In their first season with LeBron James, the Lakers went 37-45 and missed the playoffs as many players - including James - missed time due to injury. After Johnson's resignation, the team also parted ways with head coach Luke Walton. During the ensuing coaching search, multiple candidates reportedly turned down the job before Frank Vogel was hired, and a small group of fans protested team management outside Staples Center.

Cuban, 60, bought the Mavericks in 2000, just as the team began a run of 12 straight playoff appearances and 15 in 16 years, including the team's first NBA title in 2010-11. Dallas has missed the playoffs for three consecutive years.

Meanwhile Danny Ainge is just five weeks removed from his second heart attack, but that didn't stop him from delivering a strong opinion of the 2018-19 Boston Celtics on Wednesday.

"There's a lot of guys that didn't handle things the right way, and didn't make the sacrifices that needed to be done for the benefit of the team," the Boston general manager and president of basketball operations told reporters in his first interview session since his May 2 heart attack. "We didn't have 100 percent buy-in from 100 percent of the team. I did not anticipate that."

The Celtics were ousted in the second round of the playoffs by the Milwaukee Bucks to cap what was a frustrating season, finishing with just the fourth-best record in the Eastern Conference at 49-33. "We all need to learn from this past year," the 60-year-old Ainge said. Ainge said point guard Kyrie Irving - who possibly has played his last game with the team - received too much of the blame for the team's underachieving nature. "It's unfortunate that one person gets credit or blame for a team's failures," Ainge said.

MLB

Sale goes distance as Red Sox shut out Royals

Reuters
Los Angeles

C hris Sale shut down Kansas City's offense, and the visiting Red Sox took advantage of a shoddy Royals defense in Boston's 8-0 victory Wednesday night.

Rafael Devers hit a home run, scored three runs and drove in three. Brock Holt and Andrew Benintendi each had three hits.

Sale (2-7), making his 220th start, and the 300th appearance of his 10-year major league career, scattered three singles in a complete-game shutout, with 12 strikeouts and no walks. It was the seventh time in his last nine starts that Sale has struck out at least 10.

It was his first complete game since a 1-0 loss (eight innings) against the Phillies at Philadelphia on June 15, 2017, and his first shutout since April 15, 2016, against the Rays at Tampa Bay while with the Chicago White Sox.

Sale also threw an immaculate inning - striking out three batters in an inning on nine total pitches - for the second time in less than a month.

Sale struck out Kelvin Gutierrez and Nicky Lopez looking, and then Martin Maldonado went down swinging. Sale's previous perfect inning came May 8 in Baltimore.

There have been 96 such innings in major league history, and Sale joined Lefty Grove, Randy Johnson, Sandy Koufax, Nolan Ryan

and Max Scherzer in having turned the trick multiple times. Koufax accomplished it three times.

Jakob Junis (4-6) gave up six runs (five earned) on eight hits in 4 2/3 innings to take the loss. He struck out five and walked three.

The first inning has been a problem for Junis this season. He has allowed 13 runs (12 earned) in the first inning this season. He's allowed runs in the first inning of eight of his 13 starts.

The Red Sox took advantage of a leadoff walk to Mookie Betts in the first. Betts scored on a fielder's choice by Devers.

RESULTS		
Red Sox	8-0	Royals
Rangers	2-1	Orioles
D'backs	3-2	Dodgers
Mets	7-0	Giants
Angels	10-9	A's
Cubs	9-8	Rockies
Marlins	8-3	Brewers
Mariners	14-1	Astros
Rays	4-0	Tigers
Pirates	7-4	Braves
Indians	9-7	Twins
Nationals	6-4	White Sox
Blue Jays	11-7	Yankees
Phillies	7-5	Padres

Following an error on first baseman Cheslor Cuthbert, the Red Sox got another run on a two-out single by Holt. The Red Sox got four more runs in the fifth. Benintendi led off with a double and scored on Devers' one-out double to the wall in right center. The defense then let down the Royals again.

A high chopper to Junis resulted in a hit for Holt when Cuthbert failed to cover first in time. That loaded the bases with one out.

Junis struck out Michael Chavis, but Jackie Bradley Jr. unloaded them with a double to the wall in left, and Junis was done for the night.

The Red Sox got two more in the seventh on Devers' ninth home run of the season and a sacrifice fly by Sandy Leon.

DESHIELDS' 4TH HIT LIFTS RANGERS OVER O'S IN 12

Delino DeShields singled to centre with two outs in the bottom of the 12th inning to give the Texas Rangers a 2-1 victory over the visiting Baltimore Orioles on Wednesday night in the middle game of their three-game series.

The Rangers put runners on first and second with two outs against left-hander Paul Fry (0-3), the Orioles' fifth pitcher, when DeShields grounded a single to centre that scored pinch runner Isiah Kiner-Falefa with the game-winning run.

That capped a 4-for-6 night for DeShields, and all four hits were singles. He scored the other Texas run.

Left-hander Jeffrey Springs (3-1), the Rangers' sixth pitcher, retired Baltimore in order in the 12th and earned the victory.

Starter Mike Minor battled through 5 2/3 innings for Texas, weaving in and out of trouble. He gave up no runs on seven hits and two walks but struck out seven.

John Means gave the Orioles another good starting effort. The rookie left-hander allowed one run on four hits in six innings - striking out five with one walk.

The only run Means allowed came in the first when DeShields singled with one out and then scored when Elvis Andrus lined a double to right.

Baltimore lost starting catcher Pedro Severino in that inning after he took a foul ball from DeShields off the face mask. He stayed in for a few more batters before the Orioles took him out, and Chance Sisco replaced him.

Severino suffered a head contusion but no signs of a concussion. The catcher hit three homers in Baltimore's 12-11 victory over the Rangers on Tuesday.

The Orioles wasted a number of scoring chances in the early innings. They were 1-for-11 with runners in scoring position and left eight on base through five innings. Overall, Baltimore went 1-for-13 with runners in scoring position - and that one hit didn't score a run.

Baltimore could not do anything offensively until rookie shortstop Richie Martin tied the game in the ninth with a one-out solo homer off of Shawn Kelley.

The Orioles also lost two other players to injuries. Second baseman Jonathan Villar left with a sore right thumb and right fielder DJ Stewart exited with a sprained right ankle.



Boston Red Sox starting pitcher Chris Sale delivers a pitch against the Kansas City Royals in the eighth inning at Kauffman Stadium. **PICTURE:** USA TODAY Sports

GOLF

Exhausted Lee6 ready for encore after US Open triumph

'My fingers are tired because I've been sending so many messages and phone calls to everyone'

AFP
New York

An exhausted but elated Lee6 Jeong-eun will embark on the next chapter of her career at the Shoprite LPGA Classic today, just days after her maiden major victory at the US Women's Open.

The South Korean rookie has barely had time to absorb her triumph in Charleston on Sunday, when she outduelled Celine Boutier to win the Open crown by two shots.

It was the first LPGA Tour win of Lee6's career and landed her a \$1 million (890,000 euros) winner's cheque, the largest prize ever offered to the winner of a women's golf tournament.

The win marked an emotional milestone for Lee6, who pursued a professional career in order to help support her family after her father was left paralysed from a serious accident when she was a child.

Lee6's wheelchair-bound father, Lee Jung-ho, regularly supported his daughter throughout her career and would often appear at tournaments.

Speaking to reporters on Wednesday at the Seaview Golf Club in Galloway, New Jersey, Lee6 said she hoped attention would now shift to her golf rather than her family life.

"A lot of people talked about it, talked and asked about my father, but my mom got jealous, actually, so if people could ask about my mom, too," she said.

"I know my background is a little bit tragic, and I know it's kind of hard to say, but I totally understand why people are curious because obviously people don't really know about me because I just became an LPGA player. And so I wish everyone, you know, could ask about me, more than my family."

A numeral was added to Lee's family name to differentiate her from five other women on the Korean Tour with the same name, Lee Jeong-eun.

"It goes by one, two, three, four, five, six. I'm the sixth Jeongeun Lee player, and that's why they put it down as Jeongeun Lee6. But this is my lucky number too, so I would love to put down Lee6 as my last name."

Lee6 has spent this week fielding congratulations from well-wishers following her triumph on Sunday.

"My fingers are tired, it hurt



Jeongeun Lee6 of South Korea hits a tee shot on the first hole during the final round of the US Women's Open Championship at the Country Club of Charleston in Charleston, South Carolina, on June 2, 2019. (Getty Images/AFP)

a lot, because I've been sending so many messages and e-mails and phone calls to everyone," she said. "But yeah, I feel super happy that all my fans are proud of me, and even my family, and

even here, the people who are big fans of me."

Although she admits to being drained by her Open victory, she is determined to ensure her first LPGA title is only the beginning.

"Even though I'm tired, I'm still a rookie player. I still want to play well the rest of the tournaments, and I really want to focus on other tournaments.

"I don't want to think about,

"Oh, I won the major tournament, so I'm good! I really want to play the rest of the tournaments." The three-round Shoprite LPGA Classic tees off on Friday.

CANADIAN OPEN

McIlroy shoots 67 as Bradley takes early lead

Reuters
New York

Rory McIlroy shot a three-under-par 67 in his Canadian Open debut as Keegan Bradley took the early first-round lead in Hamilton, Ontario yesterday.

McIlroy mixed five birdies with two bogeys at Hamilton Golf & Country Club. The Northern Irishman was the hottest player in the world for the first three months of the year, including victory at the prestigious Players Championship.

But he has cooled off lately, not challenging for victory at either of the first two majors of the season, the Masters and PGA Championship. He also missed the cut at the Memorial tournament last week.

Defending champion Dustin Johnson got off to a terrible start, though it could have been worse.

Johnson plunged to three over par after nine holes but recovered for a one-over 71.

World number 37 Bradley notched seven birdies to set the pace on seven-under 63, one shot ahead of Irishman Shane Lowry, South Korean Im Sung-jae, Canadian Nick Taylor and South African Erik van Rooyen.

Johnson, McIlroy and other top players including world number one Brooks Koepka are competing in Hamilton with an eye towards sharpening their games ahead of next week's US Open at Pebble Beach. The Hamilton course was damp after torrential rain on tournament eve.

"I thought it was going to be sopping wet but it dried out nice," American Webb Simpson told PGA Tour Radio after shooting 66.

"It's old style, doglegs, tough par-threes, gives you birdie opportunities throughout the day but still challenging."



Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland plays his shot from the seventh tee during the first round of the RBC Canadian Open in Hamilton, Canada, yesterday. (Getty Images/AFP)

Folau sues for 'substantial' payout from Rugby Australia

Sacked Wallabies fullback Israel Folau launched legal action yesterday against Rugby Australia's decision to dismiss him over homophobic social media posts, saying he was seeking "substantial remedies" from the governing body. The devout Christian said he was defending freedom of religion by taking his case to Australia's employment watchdog the Fair Work Commission.

"No Australian of any faith should be fired for practising their religion," the 30-year-old said in a statement.

Folau's contract was terminated last month after a Rugby Australia tribunal found him guilty of a "high-level" code of conduct breach for posting on social media that "hell awaits" gay people and others he considers sinners. Folau opted not to appeal

against the tribunal ruling, voicing a lack of confidence in Rugby Australia's process. Instead, he has taken his case to the court system, saying his treatment left him "no choice but to stand up for his beliefs and the rights of all Australians".

"The messages of support we have received over these difficult few weeks have made me realise there are many Australians who feel their fundamental rights are being steadily eroded," he said. Folau's statement revealed the argument his legal team will pursue, including his assertion that he simply posted a message from the Bible. The fullback, Super Rugby's most prolific try scorer, was on a four-year contract worth more than Aus\$10 million (\$700,000) annually when he was sacked.

NFL

Redskins' Williams wants out over medical care

Reuters
New York

Seven-time Pro Bowl left tackle Trent Williams wasn't present Tuesday for the start of mandatory minicamp, and it was presumed he wanted a new contract.

One report Wednesday, however, said that isn't the case at all. Instead, CBS Sports' Jason La Canfora reported that Williams wants out of Washington because of how the team addressed surgery he had in April to remove a tumor from his scalp.

La Canfora said numerous sources confirmed that Williams' issues with the Redskins are not related to money. Instead, he wants to be traded or released "due to their handling of his recent medical situation. Has vowed not to play for them," La Canfora wrote on Twitter.

Coach Jay Gruden addressed the report with the media on Wednesday and didn't deny La Canfora's reporting. He said he found out a few days ago that Williams wouldn't be show-

ing up at minicamp and said he hopes he changes his mind and rejoins the team.

"I'm just trying to focus on the guys that are here right now," Gruden said. "I know Trent knows how much we need him and want him back. That's the only thing I can do from here. As far as what happened with him and the doctors, that's between he and the doctors, and hopefully we get that cleared up soon."

Gruden gave his support to the doctors. "I think our medical staff has done a good job," he said. "Where the frustration might lie is the timing of the diagnosis. Maybe he wishes it was diagnosed a little bit sooner."

Gruden would not discuss the specifics of the medical condition. NFL Network reported in April that Williams had an operation to remove a growth or tumor on his head that doctors initially feared was malignant, but he was expected to be fully recovered for the season.

Williams has two years left on his existing contract worth \$24 million, which includes base salaries of \$11 million in 2019

and \$12.5 million in 2020. The seven-time Pro Bowler will turn 31 before the start of training camp. Williams has been with the Redskins since 2010, when they made him the No. 4 overall selection in the NFL draft.

Reliable swing tackle Ty Nsekhe left Washington for Buffalo during free agency. Former New York Giants first-round pick Ereck Flowers has been working as the first-team left tackle, and 2018 third-rounder Geron Christian is also competing for the swing tackle job.

BROWNS WAIVE HARRISON AFTER TARDINESS

The Cleveland Browns waived former starting left tackle Desmond Harrison on Wednesday, a day after he missed the first practice of the team's mandatory minicamp. Head coach Freddie Kitchens told reporters Harrison missed a flight and was "a little late." He added that the team "just decided to move on."

Harrison, 25, started the Browns' first eight games in 2018 at left tackle - the first player to start at the position following

stalwart Joe Thomas' retirement - as an undrafted rookie out of West Georgia. He was a late scratch in Week 9 with an illness and was inactive the rest of the year after losing the starting job to Greg Robinson. Robinson was re-signed to a one-year, \$7 million deal this offseason.

Harrison was once considered a potential high draft pick after joining Texas as a top high school recruit, but he was suspended three times by the Longhorns and spent two years away from football before joining West Georgia in 2017. He starred at the 2018 NFL Scouting Combine but still went undrafted.

Meanwhile Seven-time Pro Bowl left tackle Trent Williams wasn't present Tuesday for the start of the Washington Redskins' mandatory minicamp, and it was presumed he wanted a new contract. One report Wednesday, however, said that isn't the case. Instead, CBS Sports' Jason La Canfora reported that Williams wants out of Washington because of how the team addressed surgery he had in April to remove a tumour from his scalp.



Washington Redskins' left tackle Trent Williams

SPOTLIGHT

Hamilton wants F1 to be more of 'a man's sport'

'I could do two or three races in a row and Formula One really shouldn't be like that'

AFP
Montreal

Lewis Hamilton said yesterday Formula One should be a much greater physical challenge for the drivers and they should be as tired as long-distance runners at the end of a Grand Prix. "I could do two or three races in a row and Formula One really shouldn't be like that. It's a man's sport and a lot of youngsters come in. It's quite easy for them to get straight into it," he said in a press conference ahead of this weekend's Canadian GP.

"You should be physically exhausted after a race — to the point that it should be exhausting like a marathon," he added. "If I had a choice, I would go back to V12s — naturally aspirated engines. I would have a manual gearbox. I'd make it harder for the drivers, take away all these big run-off areas you have everywhere."

Asked to reflect on themes mentioned during his appearance on David Letterman's Netflix chat show, Hamilton spoke of his father Anthony, who guided his early career until 2010 when he sacked him as his manager. "This is nothing that's not been spoken of before," said Hamilton, who conceded their relationship had "not always been great" before adding it was "fantastic now."

"This year we had Christmas with the whole family for the first time — my sisters, my mum, my step-mum and brothers. I was just out partying with my dad for his birthday until the early hours of the morning. My dad is the greatest man I know and definitely someone I aspire to be a lot like so I am pushing him in the gym. Health is everything."

Hamilton also talked about mental issues in his role as a sportsman, giving credit to a change in his diet for giving him a greater sense of well-being. "The older you get the more you understand the world and yourself. It was a big step for me to go to a plant-based diet and it has a very positive affect on me mentally and physically. I wish I had done it a lot earlier."

He said there were still humps along the way, but he had developed the "tools to handle and deal with them" and was now "in the best place I've ever been."

Asked about his legacy, he said he wanted to find a way to offer help for younger drivers to come through from similar backgrounds to himself — "a council estate in the UK" — and also to "shift the diversity" in the sport.



Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton (left) and Racing Point's Lance Stroll talk during a press conference ahead of the Grand Prix of Canada in Montreal yesterday. (AFP)

"When we started out karting, my dad said it cost £20,000 (\$25,000) in the first year and that was a huge amount of money for us. Now it is £200,000-£300,000 (\$254,000-\$381,000) in a year. And the diversity here is minimal in this sport. I want to change that, with the FIA, and in the teams and the mechanics and in the media, too."

Meanwhile, Hamilton will have a new and upgraded engine in his Mercedes for this weekend's Canadian Grand Prix and expects to be stronger than in the past at a favourite circuit. The Briton has won six times at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve but was off the podium last year in a race won by Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel.

Mercedes have racked up six straight wins, five of them in one-two formation, and Hamilton now leads team mate Valtteri Bottas by 17 points in the championship after taking four victories. "I don't think I've really excelled for a while here," the five-times champion said. "When I was at McLaren it worked quite well, our car was quite nimble back then and worked really well here. It's been a bit harder with the hybrid era, especially since we've had a longer car, since 2017."

That, however, could be about to change. "But our car is a lot better this year in the slower and medium-speed corners. I anticipate this weekend we

will be stronger than we have been in the past," Hamilton said.

Mercedes have confirmed that Hamilton and Bottas, as well as customer teams Racing Point and Williams, will have upgraded engines in Canada. Honda, Ferrari and Renault have already introduced their first upgrades.

"The guys at Brixworth (the Mercedes engine factory) have been working incredibly hard," said Hamilton. "We've had great reliability with the first engine. (But) it's always great when you have a new engine, being that it's fresh. This is a power circuit so it's come at the perfect time."

"It's the phase two. It will have all

new mods, slight improvements everywhere. It's not like at the beginning of the hybrid era, where you took massive strides forwards. It's now small percentages, but very much appreciated."

Hamilton still expects a strong challenge from Ferrari and Red Bull, however. "Honda have really picked up their pace with their engine this year so the Red Bulls should be really strong and they're great through corners," he said.

"The Ferrari is generally the quickest car in a straight line. In the past races we've managed to catch them up through the corners, but whether or not that will be the case this weekend, time will tell."

Sindhu out of Australian Open

Sydney: Star Indian shuttler PV Sindhu was knocked out of the \$150,000 Australian Open World Tour Super 300 tournament after suffering a defeat to Thailand's Nitchanon Jindapol in the second round yesterday. Sindhu, who had defeated Indonesia's Choirunnisa in the opening round, lost 19-21, 18-21 to Jindapol in a match that lasted for around 50 minutes.

Meanwhile, in the men's singles, sixth-seeded Sameer Verma also bowed out of the competition after suffering a 16-21, 21-7, 13-21 defeat in the second round against Taiwan's Wang Tzu Wei. B. Sai Praneeth, who had reached the finals of the Swiss Open this year, also lost his second-round match to Indonesia's Anthony Sinisuka Ginting 23-25, 9-21.

In men's doubles, the Indian pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty also exited the tournament getting beaten by Chinese pair of Li Junhui and Liu Yuchen 19-21, 18-21. HS Prannoy and women's doubles duo of Ashwini Ponnappa and Sikki Reddy had also crashed out of the tournament after losing their respective first-round matches on Wednesday. The mixed doubles pair of Ashwini Ponnappa and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy had also gone down fighting against Wang Chi-Lin and Cheng Chi Ya of Chinese Taipei 17-21, 21-12, 16-21.

Malaysia's Soong Joo Ven extended his fairy tale run in Sydney, when he reached the quarter-finals. Having come through the qualifying rounds on Tuesday, the 24-year-old saw off Thailand's Sitthikom Thammasin, 25-23, 21-16 to reach only his second last eight this season.

The World No 72 upset world No 36 Vincent Wong of Hong Kong in the first round. Joo Ven, however, will face an uphill task against top seed, Chou Tien Chen of Taiwan next. Also crashing out in the second round were women's singles, Sonila Cheah, who lost 23-25, 21-14, 21-11 to former world champion, Ratchanok Intanon of Thailand, and men's doubles, Goh Sze Fei-Nur Izzuddin Rumsani, who lost 21-17, 21-18 to China's Han Chengkai-Zhou Haodong.

In the mixed doubles, 2016 Olympics silver medalists, Chan Peng Soon-Goh Liu Ying chalked out a 21-19, 21-15 win over China's Ren Xiangyu-Zhou Chaomin to reaching the quarter-finals.

ATHLETICS

Mihambo breaks seven-metre mark to win long jump in Rome



Germany's Malaika Mihambo in action during the women's long jump event during the Diamond League at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome, Italy, yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP
Rome

European long jump champion Malaika Mihambo broke the seven metres mark for the first time in her career with a wind-assisted 7.07 metres (+0.5) leap on her way to victory in the Diamond League meet in Rome yesterday. Mihambo pulled out the jump on her fourth attempt to become the first woman this year to break the symbolic seven-metre mark, with the longest jump in two years. The 25-year-old finished ahead of Olympic triple jump champion Caterine Ibarguen (6.87) of Colombia and former Olympic and four-time world champion Britney Reese (6.76m) of the United States.

Earlier, Poland's Konrad Kowalczyk won the shot put with

a new meet record of 21.97 metres, breaking the mark which had been achieved in Rome nine years ago. American Darrell Hill came second with his final throw of 21.71 with Brazil's Darlan Romani third (21.68) and world champion Joe Kovacs of the United States dropping to fourth despite a season's best 21.46.

China's Lyu Huihui won the women's javelin throw, in the fourth leg of the IAAF series. The 29-year-old Asian record holder and world bronze medalist threw a best of 66.47 metres to finish ahead of Turkey's Eda Tugusuz (64.51) and Latvia's Lina Muze (63.72).

Czech two-time Olympic javelin champion Barbora Spotakova finished seventh as she returns following the birth of her second child last year. World champion Spotakova, 37, set the world record of 72.28 metres back in 2008.

"To be back after the second child is a big difference," she said. "In 2014 I came here with my partner and first child but this year I decided to come alone. I think it was one of my biggest mistakes, I'm not used to being this relaxed. A few things went wrong. It looks like I have to be in tonus to perform well."

Meanwhile, Qatar's Asian champion Abubaker Haydar Abdalla failed to finish in the men's 800m event. The event was won by USA's Donovan Brazier in a photo finish.

Botswana's Nijel Amos, who had won in Doha, ran out of steam as he approached the line, and Brazier edged ever closer, eventually catching him in the line.

After a long check, the judges awarded victory to Donovan, who came in two hundredths of a second ahead of Amos with a world leading 1:43.63.

FOCUS

Aspire Academy's football season concludes

The 2018-19 season of Aspire Academy's football department concluded on Wednesday with the final day of the latest Tri-Series tournament that brought youth teams of the Malaysian Football Federation and Greek club PAOK to Doha, where they challenged the U13, U15 and U17 teams of Aspire.

After three days of exciting games and spectacular goals, PAOK was crowned winner of the U17s and U15s, while Malaysia could take home the trophy in the U13 category. Aspire Academy's teams missed out closely on winning one of the big trophies, finishing second in each tournament.

"These tournaments have a lot of benefits for our players. They grow with the challenges they face, and we are happy to see that they are more and more taking over the initiative in the games. They want to be the protagonists and carefully try to execute they games plans they get, because they know that this is the foundation to be successful," said Edorta Murua,

Aspire Academy's Technical Football Director.

PAOK FC's U17 coach, Alexandros Alexiadis, agrees: "We faced a very strong side of Aspire today with good players and a clear philosophy. We really did everything to win, but in the end, we had to be happy about the draw that was enough to win our age group. This experience in Doha has been great for our players. Ten of the players of my team are also playing for Greece's youth national and if they keep up the good work, some might have the chance to be back in 2022 with Greece for the World Cup."

Malaysia Mohd Khushairi also stressed how important the tournament was for his payer to gain more international experience. "The organisation was great, and we are very grateful that Aspire

Academy gave us the opportunity to be part of this event. For players of this age it's crucial to get as much exposure as possible and playing against teams from Asia and Europe is a great way for them to gain valuable experiences."

This was the second Tri-series in the month

of May and came on the back of another fiercely contested set of matches from 19-23rd May 2019 that featured generations 2001, 2003 and 2005 and involved Greek club side, Panathinaikos and Tunisian club side, Etoile Sportive du Sahel and host Aspire Academy. In this first Tri-Series in May, Panathinaikos emerged victorious in the U-18 and U-16 with Etoile Sportive du Sahel winning the U-14 category. Aspire teams acquitted themselves well albeit not finishing in top positions.

The Tri-Series tournament are going to continue in the upcoming season at Aspire and will be, according to Edorta Murua, one of the most important learning tools for the talents of the Academy. "This competition is crucial for the development of our players. Moreover, we are trying to provide them also the possibility to go on training camps abroad. These tools are making it easy for the youngsters to accumulate new experiences, overcome challenges and help to close the gaps to other international football academies."



Greek club PAOK's players pose with the trophy after winning Aspire Academy's tri-series tournament.

FOCUS

Teenager Anisimova stuns Halep to reach semis

AFP
Paris

American teenager Amanda Anisimova said she was "excited" and did not suffer from nerves after stunning defending champion Simona Halep yesterday to reach a French Open semi-final against Australian eighth seed Ashleigh Barty.

The 17-year-old downed Halep 6-2, 6-4 on Court Philippe Chatrier to announce herself on the big stage, while Barty saw off 14th seed Madison Keys 6-3, 7-5 to also become a first-time Grand Slam semi-finalist.

"If I didn't look nervous is because I wasn't," said world number 51 Anisimova, who is the youngest player to reach a major semi-final since Nicole Pietrangeli at the 2007 Australian Open.

"I was just super excited and I was really happy with the opportunity. This is more than I could have asked for."

The last-four ties will be played on Friday, after Wednesday's downpour in Paris caused

a backlog of matches, with the women's semi-finals held on Court Suzanne Lenglen and Simone Mathieu to keep Chatrier free for the men's semis.

"Actually, I'm really happy that I get to play tomorrow," said Anisimova.

"I don't have to wait a whole day, because I get really eager to want to go on the court, so I'm happy I get to play tomorrow."

She is the youngest American woman to make the last four at a major since Venus Williams at the 1997 US Open, and the youngest to reach the semis at Roland Garros since Jennifer Capriati in 1990.

The defeat for third seed Halep means it has now been 12 years since the last successful title defence in Paris - Belgian Justine Henin's third straight triumph in 2007.

Still only five women have lifted back-to-back French Open titles in the Open era.

"I feel sad, because every time when I lose, I'm sad," said Halep. "And I'm a little bit upset because I couldn't make my game. I couldn't move normally."

The winner of Anisimova's clash against Barty will face either Britain's Johanna Konta or Czech 19-year-old Marketa Vondrousova in the final.

It is the first time two teenagers have reached the semi-finals at a Grand Slam for 10 years, while it had not happened at Roland Garros since Henin and Kim Clijsters in 2001.

Anisimova crushed 25 winners past a bewildered Halep, who made 17 unforced errors and served two double faults.

Halep's run of breaking in 16 consecutive return games was swiftly ended by Anisimova's big hitting, and the American broke serve in fifth game en route to a 4-2 lead. She saved a break point and then dismantled the Halep serve once more to seal the opening set in under half an hour.

Halep, who had thrashed 18-year-old Pole Iga Swiatek 6-1, 6-0 in the fourth round, faced being on the wrong end of a similarly one-sided match when she fell 3-0 down in the second.

Anisimova tightened up with

the semis in sight and the defending champion fought back to 4-4, but the youngster gathered herself to save a break point in the next game and then grabbed her first match point with a glorious backhand winner up the line.

BARTY SEES OFF KEYS

Barty also won in relative comfort on Court Suzanne Lenglen to go one better than her run to the Australian Open last eight earlier this year.

The 23-year-old was too consistent for American Keys, hitting 16 winners and four aces.

Keys, a semi-finalist at Roland Garros last year where she lost to Sloane Stephens, was undone by 26 unforced errors.

World number eight Barty is the highest-ranked woman in the semi-finals, ahead of 26th seed Konta and the unseeded youngsters Anisimova and Vondrousova. But she insisted it would not give her an advantage, saying: "As I just said, all four of us have been playing great tennis. It's a new situation for me. It's a little bit of a new territory."



Amanda Anisimova celebrates after defeating Simona Halep in French Open quarter-final yesterday. (Reuters)

TENNIS/ FRENCH OPEN

Djokovic to face Thiem in his ninth Roland Garros semi

'I just have to keep my concentration and stay in the moment. I hope to continue like this'



Serbia's Novak Djokovic celebrates after winning against Germany's Alexander Zverev in their French Open quarter-final in Paris yesterday. (AFP)



Austria's Dominic Thiem celebrates after winning his French Open quarter-final against Russia's Karen Khachanov in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
Paris

Novak Djokovic reached his ninth Roland Garros semi-final yesterday, sweeping past Alexander Zverev to keep his bid to become just the second man to hold all four Slams at the same time twice firmly on track.

Top seed and world number one Djokovic won 7-5, 6-2, 6-2 and will face Austrian fourth seed Dominic Thiem today in what will be his 35th Grand Slam semi-final. Thiem reached the semi-finals for a fourth successive year with a 6-2, 6-4, 6-2 victory against Russian 10th seed Karen Khachanov.

"It was a big challenge for me today but I was hitting the ball

more cleanly," said 32-year-old Djokovic.

"It's a great joy to be in the semi-finals again."

The problem for Djokovic now in his pursuit of a second title in Paris and 16th major is the weather.

Heavy rain is forecast to hit Paris again on Friday after Wednesday's washout.

"I just have to keep my concentration and stay in the moment. I hope to continue like this," said the Serb.

Today's semi-final will see Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer resume their great rivalry, meaning this is the first time the top four seeds have all reached the last four at a Grand Slam since the 2013 Australian Open.

The last time Djokovic made the semi-finals was 2016 when

he went on to win the title.

He has a 6-2 career lead over Thiem and beat the Austrian in the Rome semi-finals in the run-up to Paris.

However, Thiem came out on top in the Roland Garros quarter-finals in straight sets in 2017.

Fifth seed Zverev, bidding to reach a maiden Slam semi-final and become the first German in the last-four in Paris since Michael Stich in 1996, made the stronger start.

The 22-year-old had break points in the third and fifth games of the opening set and finally broke through for a 5-4 lead.

But top seed Djokovic levelled immediately before claiming the set on a Zverev double fault.

Djokovic dominated the second set as breaks in the second

and eighth games were enough to tighten his grip.

The world number one saved two more break points in the opening game of the third set and again made the German pay with a break for 4-2. Zverev's 40th and last unforced error proved to be the final point of the one-sided quarter-final.

"I had chances in the first set but he broke back and was in control," said the German.

"When he's in control, he's tough to beat. He's number one for a reason.

"I expected more from this tournament but once the first set slipped away, it was difficult."

The world number five finished with eight double faults while converting just one of eight break points. Thiem was utterly dominant on Court Suzanne

Lenglen, hammering 29 winners, as his erratic opponent contrived to tally 37 unforced errors and only 17 winners.

"The key was to control the points. I'll be ready to maybe come back here tomorrow. This is one of my favourite courts in the world," said the 25-year-old, who is chasing a maiden Grand Slam title.

Khachanov had impressed in a fourth-round victory over Juan Martin del Potro, but was never in with a chance in the quarter-final, which was delayed from Wednesday due to rain, dropping serve twice in the opening set.

He managed to get to 4-4 in the second, only to see Thiem reel off eight of the next 10 games and seal a last-four spot without even facing a break point in the match.

PREVIEW

Nadal braced for 'trouble' in Federer showdown

AFP
Paris

Rafael Nadal rekindles tennis' greatest rivalry when he faces Roger Federer in the Roland Garros semi-finals today, admitting his status as overwhelming favourite ignores the "trouble" he could face from the rejuvenated Swiss.

Defending champion Nadal is chasing a 12th title on the crushed red brick of Paris where he has lost just twice in 93 matches.

Five of those wins have come against Federer, including four finals.

Federer, the champion in 2009, is playing the French Open for the first time in four years.

Furthermore, the 37-year-old has only beaten Nadal twice on clay, with his most recent win coming 10 years ago at altitude in Madrid.

"I expect that he's going to play aggressive, changing rhythms, go to the net," said 33-year-old Nadal.

"That's my feeling because he's playing well and he has the tennis to make that happen. I have to be solid.

"I have to hit the ball strong enough to not allow him to do things from good positions.

"If I am able to play good tennis and play well with my forehand and backhand, I hope to put him in trouble. If not, I will be in trouble."

The second seeded Spaniard leads their head-to-head 23-15 with a 13-2 stranglehold on clay.

At Roland Garros, Nadal won a 2005 semi-final and the 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2011 finals against a player he first encountered 15 years ago.

'NADAL FOREHAND V FEDERER BACKHAND'

Nadal has been in impressive form as he chases an 18th major. He has dropped just one set so far in making his 12th Roland Garros semi-final and 31st at the majors.

Nadal has never lost in the

semi-finals in Paris. Two-time French Open champion Jim Courier says Nadal is the "huge" favourite but there is hope for Federer who is chasing a 21st major.

"He needs to stop Nadal's forehand with his backhand but he has never been able to do that before on this surface," said Courier who believes that Federer winning their last five matches could help.

"Nadal is a huge favourite but Roger has found a solution.

"He will be curious to see if that solution can translate from hard court."

Nadal's two losses in Paris came against Robin Soderling in the fourth round in 2009 and Novak Djokovic in the 2015 quarter-finals.

Federer is not giving up hope that he can be the third.

"Like against any player, there is always a chance. Otherwise nobody will be in the stadium to watch because everybody already knows the result in advance," said Federer.

"That's exactly what everybody believes by facing Rafa. They know it's going to be tough. But you just never know. He might have a problem. He might be sick. You never know.

"You might be playing great or for some reason he's struggling. Maybe there's incredible wind, 10 rain delays. You just don't know. That's why you need to put yourself in that position."

Ten years ago Soderling hit winner after winner as the underdog Swede ended Nadal's 31-match win streak at the tournament.

"I think to beat him on clay is challenging. But to beat him in five sets on clay is even more difficult," said Soderling who crushed 63 winners in that landmark win.

"You have to play extremely well. To beat him on clay, the only chance for any player is to be really aggressive.

"Take some risks. Many, many players, even good players, top players... you can almost see that they don't really believe 100 per cent that they can win."



This combination of file pictures shows Spain's Rafael Nadal (left) during his fourth round match of the French Open in Paris on June 2, 2019, and Switzerland's Roger Federer during his first round match on day 1 of the French Open on May 26, 2019. (AFP)