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**Controversial goal helps Blues win game five**



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# GULF TIMES SPORT



CRICKET

**England won't panic at World Cup: captain Morgan**

Page 2

TENNIS

# Nadal hands Federer worst Grand Slam loss for 11 years

It will be Nadal's 12th appearance in the championship match, which he has never lost before

AFP  
Paris

Defending champion Rafael Nadal powered past Roger Federer in the French Open semi-finals yesterday, to move within one victory of a record-extending 12th Roland Garros title after handing his "biggest rival" his worst Grand Slam defeat in 11 years.

The 33-year-old produced a masterful performance to get past Federer 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 in the last four on Court Philippe Chatrier and set up a final clash with either world number one Novak Djokovic or Austrian fourth seed Dominic Thiem tomorrow.

The second semi-final was suspended until today due to rain, with Thiem leading 6-2, 3-6, 3-1 as he looks to reach a second straight Roland Garros final.

The decision to end play drew extra ire towards the tournament organisers, after they had been labelled a "disgrace" for moving the women's semi-finals away from the showpiece Chatrier court.

It will be Nadal's 12th appearance in the championship match, which he has never lost before.

"In front (of me) was probably my biggest rival in my career with all the story that we shared together," said Nadal. "So that always makes the match a little bit more special and unique."

The third seed now has an stunning 92-2 win-loss record on the Paris clay, having beaten Federer for the sixth time in as many French Open meetings despite difficult, windy conditions.

"This court can be windy, can be difficult," added Nadal. "Today was a little bit too much."



Spain's Rafael Nadal reacts after winning a point against Switzerland's Roger Federer during their men's singles French Open semi-final at Roland Garros in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

Nadal also leads his overall head-to-head against Federer 24-15, and 14-2 on clay after ending a run of five straight losses to the 37-year-old.

He could also move to within two of Federer on the all-time Grand Slam title winners' list with an 18th major tomorrow.

A tally of just nine games meant it was Federer's heaviest defeat in a Grand Slam match since managing only four against Nadal in their famously one-sided 2008 Roland Garros final.

Nadal made only 19 unforced errors, crushing 33 winners as Federer struck 25, although that amount could easily have been doubled against any opponent other than the 11-time champion.

The defeat leaves Federer still waiting for a first victory over Nadal on clay since 10 years ago in Madrid.

It was 2009 champion Federer's first French Open campaign since 2015, after skipping the clay-court season for two years

in order to be better prepared for Wimbledon.

"I think I surprised myself maybe how deep I got in this tournament and how well I actually was able to play throughout," he said.

**TOPSY-TURVY START**

A topsy-turvy start saw the Spaniard race through the first three games before Federer broke back as the wind played havoc with the players' serves from one end.



Switzerland's Roger Federer acknowledges the audience after losing the French Open semi-final yesterday. (AFP)



People take cover from the rain during the men's semi-final between Serbia's Novak Djokovic and Austria's Dominic Thiem yesterday. (AFP)

wards the end of the second set, when second seed Nadal managed to hold under severe pressure to level at 4-4, before putting the pedal down to break despite having trailed 40-0.

The defending champion confidently served out the set to love to move one step closer to the final.

Federer's chances were slipping away quickly, and he received a warning after angrily hitting the ball into the upper reaches of Philippe Chatrier as Nadal romped to victory.

**THIEM, DJOKOVIC HELD UP BY RAIN**

Thiem would have been the happier of the two to resume playing yesterday, leading by a break in the third set after sharing the opening two with Djokovic.

The pair will instead restart their match at 1000 GMT (12:00 local time) today, before the women's final between Czech teenager Marketa Vondrousova and Australian eighth seed Ashleigh Barty.

The skies brightened almost immediately after play was ended for the day at 16:45 GMT (18:45 local), and at least another two hours of play could have been accommodated.

"I believe that we have hit rock bottom but the good thing is that the only way now is up," said former women's world number one Amelie Mauresmo.

Top seed Djokovic had been increasingly frustrated with the conditions on court with high winds kicking up the clay.

He even summoned the tour supervisor at one stage to complain about the severity of the conditions.

Tournament organisers said that fans holding tickets for the semi-final will be fully refunded as they will not be valid for today.

FOOTBALL

# Several clubs declare opposition to proposed Champions League reform

Reuters  
Porto, Portugal

Several European clubs from Switzerland, Germany, Italy, France and Portugal have publicly declared their opposition to a proposed creation of a nearly closed Champions League, saying that other clubs are also concerned.

The proposal has been put forward by the European Club Association (ECA) which has 232 members and is working with UEFA to redesign European competition from 2024 onwards.

However, following an ECA meeting in Malta on Thursday and yesterday, several member clubs said that it needed a fresh approach.

According to European league officials who have seen the plans, the controversial proposal involves a three-tier European league with promotion and relegation between each tier.

The top tier would be the new version of the Champions League but 24 of the 32 teams would keep their places for the following season, breaking the tradition that qualification is achieved through performance in domestic competition.

The ECA says it wants to help clubs outside the biggest five leagues by giving them more regular European matches.

"Any reform should ensure that clubs of all sizes can continue to develop and grow to their full potential in a manner which also protects domestic competitions," it said in a statement.

Schalke 04 chief executive Peter Peters said in a statement that "nearly all European clubs are not convinced" about the proposal and that discussions needed to start "with a blank page."

Lazio president Claudio Lotito took a similar line, saying "most" Italian clubs were against the plan.

"We have to stop the current plans and we have to sit with all stakeholders and start the whole project from scratch," he said in a statement.

St Etienne president Bernard Caiazza said the meeting in Malta was a "step forward in efforts to block the reform."

AS Monaco's deputy CEO Nicolas Holveck said that the meeting had failed to discuss the revenue distribution of club competitions, which many observers feel is heavily weighted in favour of the big clubs.

"We believe it is important to implement a fairer distribution model among participating and non-participating clubs to guarantee the proper competitive balance both in Europe and at league level," he said.

Wanja Greuel, chief executive of Swiss champions Young Boys, said that "for the very first time several clubs from all over Europe have stated their firm opposition to the current proposal presented by UEFA and ECA".

Greuel said most clubs would "fight to implement a different European football model which could benefit all clubs in Europe and not solely the elite European clubs."

FC Basel's chief executive Roland Heri said fans groups in Europe had also raised concerns. "The passion of our fans is mainly driven by the domestic games we play at domestic level in Switzerland," he said.

Frederic Longuepee, president of Girondins de Bordeaux, said a significant number of clubs were worried about impact of the reform on domestic leagues and fans' expectations.

"Any coherent reform can't protect the interest of a few at the expense of the majority," he said.



Liverpool defender Trent Alexander-Arnold kisses the UEFA Champions League trophy during an open-top bus parade around Liverpool, England, on Sunday. (AFP)

## FOCUS

# England won't panic at World Cup: captain Morgan

'All we talked about is sticking to what we do well, looking at our strengths'

Agencies  
Cardiff, Wales

**E**oin Morgan says England will not panic as they attempt to get their World Cup campaign back on track against Bangladesh following their chastening defeat against Pakistan.

The hosts started their bid to win their first-ever World Cup with a comprehensive 104-run victory against South Africa before they stumbled in their second game, losing by 14 runs.

Captain Morgan said England would not change their aggressive approach in today's match in Cardiff.

England's tactics have been based on fearless attacking from their powerful batsmen and they are also aggressive as a bowling unit, boasting the pace of Jofra Archer and Mark Wood.

"All we talked about is sticking to what we do well, looking at our strengths," he said in his pre-match press conference in the Welsh capital yesterday.

"Previous to the tournament starting we talked about losing games — how would we react? What would we counter that with?"

"Everything comes back to focusing on ourselves, how we win games of cricket and get the best out of ourselves."

England rotated their attack at Trent Bridge, bringing in Mark Wood for Liam Plunkett.

Conditions are expected to be more seamer-friendly in Wales, meaning Plunkett could return in place of a spinner.

"We'll see another day where the wicket is under covers," Morgan said. "The pitches here have been a bit greener and more seamer-friendly so that's a potential (option), yeah."

Bangladesh, who have beaten England at the past two World Cups, are in a similar position to England, having followed a win over South Africa with a loss to New Zealand.

"It is going to be a difficult game, they're a good side. I think people underestimate them but we certainly don't," Morgan said.



England's captain Eoin Morgan walks back to the pavilion after losing his wicket during the 2019 ICC Cricket World Cup match against Pakistan in Nottingham, England, on Monday. (AFP)

"Their senior players especially have played a lot of games, more so than our senior players. They are a threat but hopefully we can play well and overcome it."

Morgan said Bangladesh have a strong batting line up at the top of the order while their spinners can cause all sorts of problems for opposing teams.

Morgan said England would be ready for anything Bangladesh can throw at them, including the possibility of an opening spin attack as seen during their previous two games which yielded quick wickets.

"Mystery spin is a new challenge. Bangladesh will open with spin, definitely," said Morgan.

## Bangladesh promise England trial by spin

AFP  
Cardiff, Wales

**B**angladesh skipper Mashrafe Mortaza has promised England another trial by spin when they meet in the World Cup in Cardiff today.

Jason Roy and Jonny Bairstow's dominance at the top of the order has been a hallmark of England's rise to become the top-ranked team in one-day internationals. But the fast starts have been checked with South Africa, in the opening match of the tournament, handing the new ball to leg-spinner Imran Tahir, who dismissed Bairstow for a duck.

In England's second match, Pakistan opened their bowling with Shadab Khan and the move paid off, with the leg-spinner dismissing Roy cheaply.

The green pitches in Cardiff allowed New Zealand's arsenal of quicks to skittle Sri Lanka last weekend, while Nuwan Pradeep then did the same to Afghanistan.

As a result, England appear likely to recall Liam Plunkett, perhaps at the expense of leg-spinner Adil Rashid.

But Bangladesh will be sticking to their tried-and-tested

formula, relying on the spin of Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Shakib Al Hasan and Mosaddek Hossain. "Our spinners all over the world have played a big role, it is one of our biggest strengths," Mortaza told reporters yesterday.

"We know that Shakib is one of the biggest strengths for us. "Miraz has been doing well for a long time. I mean, the last two years, he's doing so well for us with the new ball."

"South Africa started with these tactics. So most of the teams will be taking them as well."

Bangladesh beat England at both the 2011 and 2015 World Cups. But the 2019 tournament hosts are a different proposition now, boasting a fearsome batting line-up and a strong bowling unit.

And while England lost to Pakistan in their last match, Mortaza knows his side face a tough task.

"This is one of the best teams England have ever produced, especially in the World Cup," he said.

"I think still they are in the right way winning matches, and they are in good touch. "We have been beating them the last two World Cups. That doesn't mean that we will make it happen again the way it did."



## SPOTLIGHT

## No clear favourite at the World Cup, says Border

Reuters  
London

**N**o clear favourite has emerged to win the World Cup this year because the first few games have shown that all 10 teams are capable of beating each other at the tournament, former Australia skipper Allan Border has said.

Only New Zealand, Australia and India have not been beaten yet, with the latter two set to meet at the Oval tomorrow.

"There's no obvious run-away-looking team at the moment," Border wrote in a column for the International Cricket Council. "All the sides are basically showing they can beat each other. That's the main thing that's come out of these early games."

"I think that is how most of us expected it to be at this point, that there would be a lot of teams you expect to do well and then there would be a few surprise packages."

Pakistan pulled off arguably the biggest upset so



far when they beat hosts and tournament favourites England on Monday, a day after Bangladesh sprung a surprise by defeating South Africa.

Defending champions Australia beat Afghanistan comfortably in their first match but were pushed considerably harder in Thursday's 15-run victory over West Indies.

Border, who captained Australia to World Cup glory in 1987, said the team had room for improvement and would have a clearer idea of their chances after facing 2011 champions India.

"India next up will be a big stumbling block," he added. "That's a tough hurdle for Australia but once they've played a couple of decent teams, they will have a better idea of where they are at with regards to the rest of the tournament."

## BOTTOMLINE

## Losing to Bangladesh not a 'shock', says England's Plunkett

Reuters  
London

**B**angladesh are no longer minnows and losing to them in the World Cup cannot be considered a 'shock' anymore, England fast bowler Liam Plunkett has said ahead of today's match in Cardiff between the two sides.

Bangladesh sprang an early surprise in the tournament by defeating South Africa on Sunday and the Asian side have also

beaten England in World Cup matches in 2011 and 2015.

"We saw Bangladesh beat South Africa and it wasn't a shock defeat," Plunkett told a news conference.

"I remember when they beat England way back when and it was a shock defeat."

"But there are no real shock defeats in this competition. They're a strong squad."

England won their first game comprehensively against South Africa but lost by 14 runs to Pakistan in the second and Plunkett

said the sides from the sub-continent had a tendency to get under their skins.

"Pakistan are pretty good like that, they can get niggly," Plunkett, 34, added. "Similarly Bangladesh and India are good at doing that. They are good at appealing quite a lot, it's just the way they play their cricket."

"But we've played in big competitions... around the world at the Indian Premier League and (Australia's) Big Bash in front of big crowds, so it shouldn't be too much for the players."

## Windies' Brathwaite questions umpiring as Holding hits out

AFP  
Nottingham, United Kingdom

**C**arlos Brathwaite said the West Indies were on the wrong end of too much poor umpiring following a 15-run World Cup defeat by champions Australia as Michael Holding slammed an "atrocious" display by the match officials.

West Indies opener Chris Gayle and captain Jason Holder were both twice given out on the field at Trent Bridge on Thursday but, on both sets of occasions, saw their decision to review vindicated by the third umpire.

The mood of the Caribbean side was not helped when standing umpire Chris Gaffaney missed a Mitchell Starc no-ball the delivery before the left-arm quick dismissed Gayle for 21.

Had the New Zealand official called a no-ball, the next delivery would have been a free hit from which the veteran opener could not have been dismissed.

Brathwaite accepted Gaffaney and Sri Lanka's Ruchira Palliyaguruge were doing their best, but he made no attempt to hide his annoyance after the West Indies fell short chasing a target

of 289 in Nottingham. "I don't know if I'll be fined for saying it but I just think that the umpiring was a bit frustrating," Brathwaite told reporters.

"To lose Chris in a chase of 280, who can probably get 180 of them himself obviously, broke the start that we wanted to have."

Meanwhile Holding, commenting on television, was scathing about the "weak" officiating on show at Nottinghamshire's headquarters. "The umpiring in this game has been atrocious," said Holding, one of cricket's all-time leading fast bowlers.

## UPDATE

## Pakistan, Sri Lanka share points after Bristol washout

AFP  
Bristol, United Kingdom

**T**he World Cup match between Pakistan and Sri Lanka was abandoned without a ball being bowled yesterday after persistent rain in Bristol.

The game was scheduled to begin at 10:30 (0930 GMT) but was eventually called off in the afternoon, with both teams being awarded a point.

It is the first match at the World Cup in England and Wales to be abandoned without a result.

Both teams now have three

points, with one win and a loss apiece.

Pakistan lost to the West Indies by seven wickets at Trent Bridge before beating England by 14 runs at the same venue on Monday.

Sri Lanka crashed to a 10-wicket defeat against New Zealand before pulling off a 34-run win against Afghanistan in a rain-affected game.

The call-off upset fans who had travelled to watch the game.

"We came from Lahore to watch this match and it proved a damp squib," said Farhan Malik. "We lost a crucial point because we were sure of beating Sri Lanka."



Fans take cover under an umbrella as rain washes out the 2019 Cricket World Cup match between Pakistan and Sri Lanka in Bristol, England, yesterday. (AFP)

## COMMENT

## Ponting warns Aussie batsmen of bouncers at Oval against India

Reuters  
London

**A**ustralia's assistant coach Ricky Ponting expects India to select an extra fast bowler tomorrow to exploit the holders' vulnerability to short-pitched deliveries seen in their scrappy win over the West Indies in the World Cup.

The Caribbean pace battery terrorised Australia's top order at Trent Bridge, reducing them to 38-4 in the eighth over, with Oshane Thomas hitting Usman Khawaja on the helmet in an illustration of the top order's obvious discomfort.

Steve Smith added 72 and Nathan Coulter-Nile hit 92 to help Australia build a respectable score, though the side still collapsed for 288 with one over left of their full quota.

India preferred Bhuvneshwar Kumar's swing to Mohamed Shami's pace against South Africa, but they might sacrifice one of their two frontline spinners to accommodate a paceman at the Oval, Ponting suggested.

"(Jasprit) Bumrah we know is a very good new ball bowler and I'm sure he'll mix it up and bowl some short stuff and some full stuff," Ponting told cricket.com.au referring to the currently top-ranked ODI bowler.

"Bhuvneshwar will probably

not worry you too much with his pace or his bouncers. Hardik (Pandya) can maybe rush you a little bit, so maybe they have a decision to make on the overall make up of their side.

"Do they maybe go with only the one spinner and use (all-rounder) Kedar Jadhav as a second spinner and play another fast bowler?"

"We'll worry about that in the next couple of days and make sure all the boys are prepared."

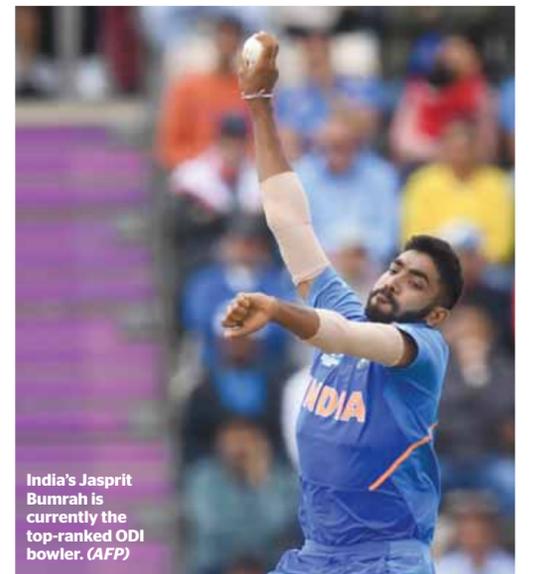
A three-time World Cup winner himself, Ponting said he would discuss the matter with Khawaja and Glenn Maxwell, who responded to one short delivery with an unusual attempt to pull the ball, only to lose his wicket.

"Usman got hit again... so he's had a few hits in the last few weeks. I haven't spoken to him (to see) if he's rattled, but that's part and parcel of top order batting against brand new balls..."

"You've got to find a way to cope and a way to get through hostile spells knowing that it's not going to last forever," Ponting said.

"It's a bit of an uncharacteristic shot from (Maxwell) as well. He's not a natural hooker and puller of the ball anyway," said Ponting.

"It's just a little bit of a blip on the radar that we'll have a chat about and make sure we're prepared for the next game."



India's Jasprit Bumrah is currently the top-ranked ODI bowler. (AFP)



FOCUS

# Kiwis ready to counter Afghan spin, says Taylor

While the Black Caps have won both their matches in the tournament so far, Afghanistan are yet to open their account

AFP  
Taunton, United Kingdom

Ross Taylor insists New Zealand are ready for a trial by spin against Afghanistan today as they look to keep their winning momentum going in the World Cup.

The Kiwis edged out Bangladesh by two wickets on Wednesday, with Taylor hitting 82 in his team's tense chase at the Oval to record their second straight win in as many matches.

New Zealand, who were finalists in the 2015 edition, have relied on their paceman to get favourable results, but Taylor believes tackling spin will be key against the Asian minnows at Taunton.

"I think against Afghanistan, they have a lot of spin there, so something to factor in," said Taylor, who has recorded three 40 plus scores in his last four ODI innings.

"But two from two, that was what we wanted to do and we were able to do it."

While Taylor and skipper Kane Williamson got the runs during their 105-run partnership in London, it was their pace attack led by Matt Henry that ran through the Bangladesh batting.

Henry claimed four wickets to take his tally to seven in two games. He is well supported by Trent Boult and Lockie Ferguson, who can clock speeds up to 96 mph.

Taylor believes that Ferguson, with his express pace, is the key man for the Black Caps.

"Lockie, he just gives you that X-factor. Obviously our fastest bowler. He is going to be a key factor for us if we're going to feature in this tournament," said Taylor. "I think he's creating pressure for the guy at the other end (to take wickets)."

Ferguson's pace partner Henry said that Afghanistan are a "dangerous side" and New Zealand will treat them with "utmost respect".

Afghanistan, who are playing just their second 50-over World Cup, have lost their two games in the tournament so far but not



New Zealand's Matt Henry celebrates taking the wicket of Bangladesh's Mohamed Saifuddin during the ICC Cricket World Cup match at The Oval in London on Wednesday. (Reuters)

without a fight.

Leg-spinner Rashid Khan leads the charge with Mohamed Nabi, who returned figures of 4-30 with his off spin in their previous loss against Sri Lanka.

But it's their batting that has let them down as they were dismissed for 152 in their revised chase of 187 in a rain-hit game Cardiff on Tuesday.

"We need some improvement in the batting, we need more partnerships," Afghanistan skipper Gulbadin Naib said after the

Sri Lanka loss.

Afghanistan medium-pace bowler Mirwais Ashraf, who was part of the team's campaign in the previous World Cup, said the senior batsmen need to step up or give way to youngsters.

"We've seen the same things play out in both of the matches so far. There have been too many mistakes and some players aren't batting very responsibly," he said.

"I think it's time to give a chance to some of the other seamers and batsmen in the squad now."

## Afghan keeper Shahzad out of WC

Reuters  
London

Afghanistan wicketkeeper Mohamed Shahzad has been ruled out of the World Cup due to a knee injury and replaced in the squad by 18-year-old Ikram Ali Khil, organisers said on

Thursday. Shahzad, 32, played in Afghanistan's defeats by Australia and Sri Lanka and has represented his country in 84 one-day internationals. Khil has played one test match and two one-day internationals, against Ireland in March. Afghanistan's next World Cup match is against New Zealand in Taunton today.

## Williamson to struggle against Rashid despite IPL familiarity: Naib

Reuters  
Taunton, England

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson will struggle to read Indian Premier League (IPL) teammate Rashid Khan in today's World Cup match, Afghanistan skipper Gulbadin Naib predicted yesterday. Though not a great turner of the ball, Rashid's guile and accuracy make him a limited-overs asset especially sought after by Twenty20 franchises across the cricketing world. Williamson has spent two seasons sharing the Sunrisers Hyderabad dressing room with the wily 20-year-old and Naib has no doubt Afghanistan's bowling talisman will prevail over the Kiwi batting mainstay at Taunton. "Rashid is not like the other bowlers," Naib told reporters, conceding the Afghan players themselves are clueless even after numerous net sessions with the leg-spinner. "I think it's not only for Kane, also it is difficult for our players too. It's difficult for our

batsmen and we're playing against him in the nets." Rashid bowls a mean googly but it is his ability to bowl quickly through the air that hurries the batsmen. "He is very different, quick and fast. He doesn't give you time to pick him. So it's very difficult," Naib added. Afghanistan batsmen will have their own challenges against a formidable New Zealand pace attack including Matt Henry, who currently leads the wicket-takers' list, and Trent Boult, the current number two ODI bowler. Naib said they would try to play the "Afghan way" to bounce back from losses in their first two matches when they face the 2015 finalists. "We will play our natural game, just go for who we are and why we're here," he said. "It's important we don't look for the names (in the New Zealand team), just play the ball. "They have plenty of experience in the New Zealand side — Trent Boult and other guys. But we look forward to playing our natural game and playing the Afghan way. Hopefully we do the best we can."



Afghanistan's Rashid Khan fields during the ICC Cricket World Cup match against Australia in Bristol, England, last week. (AFP)

BOTTOMLINE

# ICC tell India star Dhoni to ditch World Cup gloves

AFP  
London

Cricket's governing body insisted yesterday that India's MS Dhoni will not be allowed to wear an apparent military insignia on his World Cup wicketkeeping gloves.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) had defended Dhoni after he sported a dagger logo on his green gloves in India's win over South Africa on Wednesday.

Dhoni is an honorary lieutenant colonel in India's Parachute Regiment and the BCCI wrote to the International Cricket Council asking for clearance for their star to keep wearing the gloves.

But the ICC responded by saying in a statement: "The logo displayed by MS Dhoni in the previous match is not permitted to be worn on his wicket-keeping gloves."

"The regulations for ICC events do not permit any individual message or logo to be displayed on any items of clothing or equipment."

"In addition to this, the logo also breaches the regulations in relation to what is permitted on wicketkeeper gloves."

According to the ICC rules from the World Cup clothing and equipment regulations manual, only two manufacturer identifications can be sported at the back of each glove.

Also, the logos on the glove should not have a political or racial connotation of any sort.

The gesture by Dhoni gained widespread attention on television and on social media in India, with #DhoniKeepTheGlove trending on Twitter.

BCCI responded by sending a formal request to the ICC, stressing the logo was "not the paramilitary regimental dagger that is embossed on his gloves. So Dhoni is not in breach of ICC regulations."

India's sports minister Kiren Rijiju said the government did not interfere in "matters of sports bodies."

"But when the issue is related to the country's sentiments, then the interest of the nation has to be kept in mind. I urge the BCCI to take appropriate steps on the issue," he tweeted.

The Indian team though did not comment on the matter.

It is believed Dhoni is likely to continue to wear the same gloves but cover the insignia with tape.

In March, the team wore camouflage-style caps provided by Dhoni during a one-day game against Australia as a tribute to the Indian armed forces after 40 troops were killed in a suicide bomb attack in Kashmir.

The ICC has previously ruled against players making political statements, banning England all-rounder Moeen Ali in 2014 from wearing wristbands saying "Save Gaza" and "Free Palestine".

India's MS Dhoni sports a dagger logo on his green wicket-keeping gloves during the match against South Africa in Southampton on Wednesday. (AFP)



COMMENT

## NZ should find Afghanistan less daunting, says Vettori

Reuters  
London

New Zealand should face a less "daunting" task against Afghanistan in their third match of the Cricket World Cup in Taunton today, according to former captain Daniel Vettori.

After their first two games, Kane Williamson's side are at the top of the standings over Australia on net run rate after achieving two contrasting victories.

They cruised to a 10-wicket win over Sri Lanka in their opening game, then lurched to a two-wicket victory against Bangladesh on Wednesday at The Oval in London.

Vettori, who was considered one of the finest exponents of left-arm spin in the world before

he retired from internationals after the 2015 Cricket World Cup final, said the Bangladesh match was a classic but his former team mates should not be under as much pressure on Saturday.

"The result looked pretty comfortable at one stage but Bangladesh, to their credit, fought back really well and it made for an intriguing contest, one of the games of the... Cricket World Cup so far," Vettori wrote in a column on the official tournament website.

"It was nice to have an old-school game of one-day cricket. "Next up is Afghanistan and that game is not quite as daunting. It's still a big one but New Zealand have had a good start to the tournament."

Gulbadin Naib's side enter the match today having received a seven-wicket thrashing at the hands of Australia in Bristol be-

fore they were bowled out for 152 inside 33 overs chasing a victory target of 202 against Sri Lanka in Cardiff.

While seeking a third successive victory was the ultimate goal for today, Vettori added that he thought facing Afghanistan for only the second time in a one-day international would also be motivating for the Black Caps.

"It's a big challenge but the Black Caps will prepare well especially for the likes of (leg-spinner) Rashid Khan who many of the team won't have faced before," said the 40-year-old, who took 4-18 in the six-wicket win against Afghanistan at the 2015 tournament.

"But that is what a World Cup is all about, trying new challenges and playing against top teams, so it's a game that both teams can really look forward to."

## Australia's Zampa censured over obscenity

AFP  
London

Adam Zampa has been reprimanded by the International Cricket Council after using an "audible obscenity" in Australia's batting 15-run World Cup win over the West Indies.

The incident happened at the end of the 29th over of the West Indies innings at Trent Bridge on Thursday.

Leg-spinner Zampa admitted to the level-one offence and one demerit point has been added to his disciplinary record. When a player reaches four or more demerit points within a



24-month period, they are converted into suspension points and a player is banned. Zampa, 27, took one for 58 on a day on which Nathan Coulter-Nile and Mitchell Starc starred as Australia maintained their 100 percent record in the tournament.

Coulter-Nile hammered 92 from 60 balls from number eight in the order after Steve Smith (73) and Alex Carey (45) had helped Australia recover from 38 for four to reach 288 all out in 49 overs. The West Indies could only manage 273-9 in their 50 overs, with Starc taking five wickets.

## TENNIS

# Vondrousova, Barty shrug off row to reach final

Vondrousova, 19, is the first teenager to reach a major final in 10 years



Australia's Ashleigh Barty in action during her semi-final match against Amanda Anisimova of the US at Roland Garros in Paris yesterday.

AFP  
Paris

Ashleigh Barty and Marketa Vondrousova set-up a Roland Garros final showdown yesterday, shrugging off a sexism row which had seen their semi-finals shifted away from the tournament's showpiece court.

Barty, 23, reached her first final at the majors, coming back from a set and 0-3 down to defeat 17-year-old Amanda Anisimova 6-7 (4/7), 6-3, 6-3 in a rollercoaster semi-final.

Czech teenager Marketa Vondrousova also made sure of her place in a maiden final at the Slams by edging out Britain's Johanna Konta 7-5, 7-6 (7/2).

Vondrousova, 19, is the first teenager to reach a major final in 10 years since Caroline Wozniacki at the 2009 US Open and the first at Roland Garros in 12 years.

Today's final will be the youngest final at a Slam since the 2008 Roland Garros championship match when 20-year-old Ana Ivanovic defeated Dina Safina, 22.

Vondrousova is the first teenager in a Paris final since Ivanovic in 2007.

Eighth seed Barty is the first Australian in a French Open final since Samantha Stosur finished runner-up in 2010.

"That was amazing, both good and bad," said Barty who will rise to the top three in the rankings next week.



Marketa Vondrousova of the Czech Republic celebrates winning her semi-final match against Britain's Johanna Konta in Paris yesterday.

"It was the hardest thing that I ever had to do.

"I am really proud of the way I fought especially in the conditions which were cold and windy.

"Now I can't wait for the final, it's incredible."

Both semi-finals got under-

way after accusations of sexism were made against French Open organisers who had decided to shift the matches away from the showpiece Court Philippe Chatrier.

The main arena had already been scheduled to stage the men's semi-finals between Ra-

fael Nadal and Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic against Dominic Thiem.

The WTA said the decision, taken after Wednesday's play was washed out and prompted by fears of more rain yesterday, was "unfair and inappropriate".

Former world number one Amelie Mauresmo of France said it was a "disgrace".

Barty, 23, raced into a 4-0 lead with successive breaks as Anisimova, plagued with nerves, managed just one point.

The 17-year-old saved two set points in the sixth game to finally get on the board and retrieved a break for 2-5.

She broke twice again for 6-5 but faltered when she served for the set before securing the tie-break.

Anisimova then led 3-0 in the second set, with Barty failing to win a point.

However, in a perfect capsule of the unpredictable semi-final, played out in front of a half-full Court Suzanne Lenglen, Barty claimed the next six games to level the tie.

The Australian, who once famously took a break from tennis to pursue a cricket career, even recovered from a break at 1-2 down in the decider.

She eventually held her nerve as Anisimova, bidding to become the youngest finalist in Paris since Martina Hingis in 1997, fell apart despite gamely saving five match points.

"I mean, I was kind of, like, frozen and I couldn't really get into my game," said Anisimova of her wretched start although she has the consolation of knowing

she'll be in the top 30 next week.

Over on a damp and windy Court Simonne Mathieu, world number 38 Vondrousova battled past 26th seed Konta who was bidding to become Britain's first female French Open finalist since Sue Barker won the 1976 title.

Konta looked the stronger player for large periods of the match but a staggering 41 unforced errors proved costly.

The match was played in an atmosphere more associated with first-round ties rather than semi-finals – in front of a smattering of spectators on the 5,000-capacity arena.

"The way it looks probably speaks for itself more than anything," said Konta after the match in reference to the court.

Konta made a quick start as Vondrousova struggled with the wind and her nerves on serve – the Briton forging 5-3 ahead.

But the 28-year-old stuttered with a one-set lead in sight, missing three set points and then being broken when serving for the opener.

Vondrousova took full advantage, reeling off four straight games to make Konta pay.

Konta gathered herself, though, and took total control of the second set with an early break, moving 5-3 in front again.

But she tightened up once more when the pressure was on, dropping serve when one game from forcing a decider in a downpour of errors.

With light rain falling on Roland Garros, Vondrousova sealed victory by racing through the tie-break and into the final.

## SPOTLIGHT

## Federer won't rule out 2020 Roland Garros return

AFP  
Paris

Roger Federer suffered his worst Grand Slam mauling since 2008 at the hands of Rafael Nadal but hasn't ruled out returning to Roland Garros in 2020 – when he will be almost 39 years old.

Federer slumped to a 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 loss to the 11-time French Open champion in the semi-finals yesterday.

Nadal now leads his overall head-to-head against Federer 24-15, and 14-2 on clay with the Swiss star's last win on the surface against the Spaniard coming back in 2009.

"Next year, just like with any other tournament, we'll see what happens," said Federer, who returned to Roland Garros this year for the first time since 2015.

"But I definitely enjoyed the clay court season and the French Open, so that would help the chances, I guess, to return.

"It's not like it's been a shocker. So from that standpoint, it's okay."

In damp, swirling conditions on Court Philippe Chatrier, Nadal made only 19 unforced errors, crushing 33 winners as Federer struck 25.

Nadal will be appearing in a 12th French Open final and chasing a 12th title for an 18th major which would put him just two



behind Federer in the all-time list.

Yesterday, 33-year-old Nadal also mastered the wind which battered Paris with gusts of up to 37 kph blowing the clay off the court and into the eyes of the players and spectators.

It all played into Nadal's hands as he took his record in the tournament to 92 wins against just two losses.

"He makes you feel uncomfortable the way he defends the court and plays on clay. There is nobody who even plays remotely close to him," said Federer.

"I don't even know who I need to go search for to go practice with somebody who plays like him.

"I was thinking that during the match. It's just amazing how he plays from deep and then is able to bounce back and forth from the baseline."

### Anisimova eager to carry French Open confidence onto grass

Paris: Teenager **Amanda Anisimova** hopes the confidence she gained during her amazing run at the French Open will help her to succeed during the grasscourt season.

A day after bamboozling defending champion Simona Halep, the 17-year-old missed out on a place in the final after falling to a 6-7(4) 6-3 6-3 defeat to Australian Ashleigh Barty in a see-saw contest yesterday.

The first player born in the 2000s to reach a Grand Slam semi-final, Anisimova looked lost during a woeful start against eighth seed Barty.

"I started off pretty rough. I was kind of frozen and I couldn't really get into my game," she told reporters.

"And then when I was down 5-0, I just tried to keep the ball in the court, and then I went up in that set."

The fightback was not enough to carry her over the finishing line as Barty used her wealth of experience to tame an opponent who will break into the top 30 of the WTA rankings on Monday.

But Anisimova is taking a lot of positives from her French Open run.

"It's a positive week for me. I'm



just going to try and be happy about the couple weeks, and hopefully today I'll be a little bit happier than I am right now," she said.

"I'm really excited about the grass season. I gained a lot of confidence in the past couple of weeks."

Anisimova, however, has no experience on grass at tour-level so she will be stepping into the unknown.

"I played junior Wimbledon one time and I lost, like, 13-11 in the third set or something," she said.

"Everyone tells me my game suits grass well, but that time I didn't leave thinking that. Hopefully, with a little bit more practice and getting used to it, then maybe I can do well."

## FORMULA 1

## Hamilton fastest in Canada practice

Reuters  
Montreal

Formula One world champion **Lewis Hamilton** clocked the best time in a dusty first practice session for the Canada Grand Prix yesterday as Mercedes broke in an upgraded engine.

It was business as usual for Mercedes as Britain's Hamilton lapped the island circuit named after Ferrari great Gilles Villeneuve with a fastest time of one minute 12.767 seconds, 0.147 ahead of Finnish teammate Valtteri Bottas.

Mercedes have dominated on every circuit this season, with Hamilton and Bottas winning all six races, crossing one-two in five of them.

Five times world champion Hamilton sits 17 points clear of Bottas at the top of the standings and served notice that he will again be a threat as he bids to equal Michael Schumacher's seven Canadian Grand Prix victories between 1994 and 2004.

Charles Leclerc was third quickest for Ferrari, who have yet to get in gear this season



but are hoping to provide a bigger threat to Mercedes on a power circuit that plays to their strengths.

Leclerc's teammate Sebastian Vettel, who won from pole here last year, could only manage the fifth best time behind Red Bull's Max Verstappen.

Several cars spun in the opening session on what Verstappen complained was an "insanely dirty" track.

Antonio Giovinazzi was involved in the most serious slip up when he spun his Alfa Romeo into the wall midway through the session, briefly bringing out the virtual safety car.

## BOTTOMLINE

## Court switch made it feel unlike a semi-final: Konta

Reuters  
Paris

Johanna Konta said her 7-5 7-6(2) defeat by Czech Marketa Vondrousova had not felt like a French Open semi-final after it was played 24 hours late and on a half-empty small showcourt.

Wednesday's deluge in Paris left organisers with a big scheduling headache and led them to squeezing in all four singles semi-finals yesterday when more rain was forecast.

With the men's semi-finals



occupying Court Philippe Chatrier, as is usual on the second Friday of the tournament,

the delayed women's semis were switched with Konta and Vondrousova put on the new 5,000-capacity Court Simonne Mathieu.

In a bid to allow both women's finalists to have the same recovery time for today's title decider, Ashleigh Barty and Amanda Anisimova played at the same time on Court Suzanne Lenglen.

WTA Tour chief Steve Simon said the scheduling was "unfair and inappropriate" and while Konta did not use it as an excuse, she was clearly miffed at playing such a big Grand Slam match away from the main showcourt.

Asked if it felt like her two previous Grand Slam semi-finals, played on Melbourne's Rod Laver Arena and Wimbledon's Centre Court, the British player said: "In terms of the surrounding and the occasion, probably not.

"Obviously I'm aware in what match I'm playing and what round. But, yeah, in terms of where we were, probably not.

"To be honest, I think the way it looks probably speaks for itself more than anything."

Konta said she had not been consulted about the switch to Simonne-Mathieu court.

"If the organisers do not feel that (women's semi-finals) are something that can be promoted and celebrated, then I think it's the organisers you need to have a conversation with, not me, because I did my job and I did my job well."

It was a frustrating day for Konta as she was bidding to become the first British woman to reach a Grand Slam final since 1977.

She had Vondrousova 3-5 15-40 down in the first set but on her first set point, she charged in and blazed an easy volley long with the court at her mercy.



NHL

# Controversial goal helps Blues win game five

The Blues carry a 3-2 lead over Bruins in the best-of-seven series into Game 6 in St. Louis tomorrow



St. Louis Blues' David Perron (left) celebrates after scoring against the Boston Bruins in Game Five of the NHL Stanley Cup finals in Boston on Thursday. (AFP)

Reuters  
Boston

To the Boston Bruins, the reaction of St. Louis Blues forward Tyler Bozak after tripping Noel Acciari in the third period of Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final said it all. Bozak immediately threw his hands up to protest a penalty that was never called. Moments later, David Perron scored what would be the game-winning goal with 9:24 to play as the Blues came away with a 2-1 victory on Thursday night to move one win away from their first Stanley Cup title. The Blues carry a 3-2 lead in the best-of-seven series into Game 6 in St. Louis tomorrow.

Blues goalie Jordan Binnington made 38 saves in a brilliant performance, but after the game, most the focus was paid toward the missed call and its effect on the outcome of such a pivotal contest.

"Yeah, it is frustrating," said Bruins forward Patrice Bergeron. "Especially with what's at stake. Bottom line, you have to be ready for Game 6. That's all we can focus on." Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy wasn't as quick to move on. Like some of his players, he pointed the finger further back to Blues coach Craig Berube calling out the officiating following his team's 7-2 loss in Game 3 as the real turning point of the series. "There was a complaint or whatever put forth by the opposition that seems to have changed everything," Cassidy said. "The non-call on Acciari... it was egregious." Berube disagreed with the idea that his comments changed the narrative. "I'm not here to judge the officials and calls that could have been or couldn't have been," he said. "They go both ways. I mean, there's calls the other way that could have been called and they weren't, so I don't know what to say about that. I really don't want to say anything about it."

Regardless of their frustration, the Bruins made it a game late when Jake DeBrusk scored with 6:28 remaining in the third period to make it 2-1. But Binnington, who was tested from the start, held firm the rest of the way. "We just battled it out, trusted each other, stayed with it and got better as the game went on," said Binnington, who tied the NHL rookie record for most wins by a goaltender in a single postseason with his 15th. Tuukka Rask had 19 saves in the loss for Boston. No doubt energized by the presence of captain Zdeno Chara — who played despite sustaining a reported broken jaw on a puck to the face during the second period of Game 4 — the Bruins came out firing in the first period, outshooting the Blues 17-8. However, St. Louis broke through just 55 seconds into the second period. Positioned in front of the net, Ryan O'Reilly backhanded the puck over the glove of Rask off a through-the-legs feed from

Zach Sanford. Forward David Krejci kept it a 1-0 game with a desperation save late in the second period. The Bruins nearly tied it when they got a puck on the goal line with 13 minutes left in the third, but replay confirmed Binnington never let it get over the threshold. Perron's controversial goal came less than three minutes later to give the Blues a 2-0 lead. "Yeah, I know there's something I guess the fans weren't too happy with," said Perron in reference to the crowd's reaction of throwing rally towels and trash onto the ice in protest of the call. "Obviously, when people expect things to go a certain way and it doesn't, you know, stuff happens," added Bozak, who described his getting tangled up with Acciari as a "puck battle." With Chara on the mend, the Bruins dressed seven defensemen, Steven Kampfer subbing for forward David Backes.

NBA

# Warriors part-owner banned for shoving Raptors' Lowry

Reuters  
Toronto

Golden State Warriors minority owner Mark Stevens, who shoved the Kyle Lowry of the Toronto Raptors during a Finals game on Wednesday, has been fined \$500,000 and banned from games for a year, the Warriors and the NBA said on Thursday. Lowry tumbled into the front row of the crowd in Oakland while diving for a loose ball during the fourth quarter and Stevens, who was sitting courtside, used one hand to push the player as he was getting back on his feet. Guard Lowry later said that Stevens also "said a couple vulgar words" to him. Stevens, 60, was escorted out of the game and Lowry called for him to be banned from all future NBA games. "Investor Mark Stevens has been banned from attending NBA games and Warriors team activities for one year and has been fined \$500,000 for pushing and directing obscene language toward the Toronto Raptors' Kyle Lowry," the NBA and the team said in a statement. Stevens late Thursday issued a formal apology saying he was embarrassed by his "lapse in judgement" and said he accepted the punishment. "What I did was wrong and there is no excuse for it," he said. "Mr. Lowry deserves better, and I have reached out today in an attempt to directly apologise to him and other members of the Raptors and Warriors organisations. I'm grateful to those who accepted my calls. The

behaviour I demonstrated last night does not reflect the person I am or have been throughout my life. I made a mistake and I'm truly sorry. I need to be better and look forward to making it right." The Warriors earlier in the day issued their own apology to Lowry. "Mr. Stevens' behaviour last night did not reflect the high standards that we hope to exemplify as an organisation," the Warriors said in a statement. "We're extremely disappointed in his actions and, along with Mr. Stevens, offer our sincere apology to Kyle Lowry and the Toronto Raptors organisation for this unfortunate misconduct. There is no place for such interaction between fans — or anyone — and players at an NBA game." Stevens, who joined the Warriors' ownership team in 2013, is a billionaire venture capitalist who was a partner with Sequoia Capital until 2012 and is now a managing partner of S-Cubed Capital. Warriors coach Steve Kerr echoed the team's statement. "I will also personally apologise to Kyle and to the Raptors. That's unacceptable," he told reporters. Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James took to Instagram to call for the league to take swift action against Stevens prior to the announcement of the fine and the ban. "There's absolutely no place in our BEAUTIFUL game for that AT ALL," James said. "He himself being a fan but more importantly PART-OWNER of the Warriors knew exactly what he was doing which was so uncalled for," he said.



Kyle Lowry (left) of the Toronto Raptors yells at Golden State Warriors minority investor Mark Stevens for pushing him during the Game Three of the NBA on Wednesday. (AFP)

MLB

# Kepler hits three home runs as Twins top Indians

Reuters  
Cleveland, USA

Max Kepler recorded his second career three-homer performance at Progressive Field as the visiting Minnesota Twins averted a series sweep with a 5-4 victory over the Cleveland Indians on Thursday. Kepler, who was mired in an 0-for-21 slump, led off the game with homer, added a two-run shot in the third inning, walked in the fifth and started the seventh with a towering blast to centre field. The 26-year-old also belted three homers in Cleveland on Aug. 1, 2016. In the ninth inning, Kepler hit an infield single to finish 4-for-4. Mitch Garver ripped an RBI double, and Jose Berrios (8-2) tossed six-plus strong innings for the Twins, who prevented both their first three-game losing streak and sweep of the season.



Minnesota Twins' Max Kepler watches after hitting a two-run home run against Cleveland Indians. (USA TODAY Sports)

**ROCKIES 3, CUBS 1**  
Peter Lambert struck out nine in seven innings and hit a single in his major league debut, and Colorado won at Chicago. Ian Desmond doubled twice for Colorado, which salvaged the finale of a three-game series. Scott Oberg pitched the ninth for his third save. Lambert (1-0) had his contract selected from Triple-A Albuquerque on Thursday and became the third-youngest pitcher to debut for the Rockies. The 22-year-old had an impressive first start, allowing one run on four hits and one walk.

**ASTROS 8, MARINERS 7**  
Myles Straw led off the 14th inning with a triple and scored on Yuli Gurriel's

sacrifice fly as Houston defeated host Seattle. Robinson Chirinos, Alex Bregman and Jack Mayfield homered for the Astros, who took three of four games in the series. Houston's Chris Deveniski (1-0) pitched the final two innings, striking out four. Matt Festa (0-1), the eighth Mariners pitcher, took the loss.

**PADRES 5, NATIONALS 4**  
Five Padres pitchers retired the last 20 hitters they faced as host San Diego rallied from a four-run first-inning deficit to defeat Washington. Franmil Reyes capped a three-run fifth inning against Patrick Corbin (5-4) with a line drive for a tie-breaking sacrifice fly. Left-handed starter Joey Lucchesi, who gave up four runs in the first on a two-run single by Howie Kendrick and a two-run homer by Brian Dozier, re-

tired the final eight Nationals he faced after Dozier's two-out double in the third to improve to 5-3 on the season.

**ATHLETICS 7, ANGELS 4**  
Stephen Piscotty homered and drove in two runs while right-hander Mike Fiers worked six effective innings as visiting Oakland beat Los Angeles. The routine win allowed the A's to take two of three from their California rivals in a series highlighted by a 10-9 Angels win on Wednesday in which Oakland blew a 7-1 lead. Oakland jumped on Angels starter Tyler Skaggs (4-6) for three runs each in the fourth and fifth innings to take a 6-1 lead. The A's never looked back.

**RED SOX 7, ROYALS 5**  
Boston completed a three-game sweep

at Kansas City, capping a series in which they outscored the Royals 23-8. Colten Brewer (1-2) was the winning pitcher on a bullpen-heavy day for Boston, which won its fourth straight, after he allowed two hits in two scoreless innings of relief. Matt Barnes pitched the ninth for his fourth save in seven chances. Kansas City's Danny Duffy (3-3) pitched just 2 1/3 innings, allowing four runs on four hits, all in the third inning.

**CARDINALS 3, REDS 1**  
Paul DeJong hit a tiebreaking two-run homer in the seventh inning, and St. Louis held on to beat visiting Cincinnati in the finale of a rain-shortened two-game series. St. Louis starter Dakota Hudson went 6 1/3 innings, matching the longest outing of his major league career. He allowed one run and five hits,

striking out three and walking four. John Gant (5-0) threw 1 1/3 innings of scoreless relief, and Jordan Hicks pitched the ninth for his 12th save.

**YANKEES 6, BLUE JAYS 2**  
Aaron Hicks hit a three-run home run, JA Happ allowed one run in seven innings, and visiting New York avoided a three-game sweep by defeating Toronto. The Blue Jays had captured the first two games of the three-game set to win their first series since April 26-28. Gio Urshela added a solo homer for the Yankees, who ended a three-game losing streak. DJ LeMahieu had three hits, a walk and two RBIs.

**PIRATES 6, BRAVES 1**  
Colin Moran hit a two-run homer, Gregory Polanco added a solo shot, and Josh Bell doubled three times for Pittsburgh, which topped visiting Atlanta to take two of three in the series. It was the first series win by the Pirates since they took three of four May 16-19 at San Diego. They had lost four straight series. Freddie Freeman hit a homer and walked, and Brian McCann and Austin Riley had two hits apiece for the Braves, who had won six of their previous seven series.

**RAYS 6, TIGERS 1**  
Travis d'Arnaud hit his first two homers of the season, a pair of two-run shots, to power Tampa Bay past host Detroit. The Los Angeles Dodgers traded d'Arnaud to the Rays last month shortly after signing him as a free agent. D'Arnaud, who did not play the previous three games, had driven in only two runs this season. Willy Adames also homered, while Yandy Diaz supplanted three hits. Jalen Beeks (5-0), the

second of five pitchers used by the Rays, got the victory. He held the Tigers scoreless in 4 1/3 innings as Tampa Bay won the series, 2-1.

**BREWERS 5, MARLINS 1**  
Christian Yelich hit his major-league-leading 23rd home run, and Mike Moustakas went deep twice, guiding Milwaukee past visiting Miami. All three homers were hit against Marlins left-hander Caleb Smith (3-4). The Brewers, who lead the National League with 108 homers, snapped their two-game losing streak.

**RANGERS 4, ORIOLES 3**  
Hunter Pence homered, and Ronald Guzman and Danny Santana each drove in a run as Texas defeated visiting Baltimore. The Rangers took two of three from the Orioles, who have not won a series since late April. Ariel Jurado (3-2) gave the Rangers six strong innings. He allowed three runs on eight hits and struck out six with one walk.

**METS 7, GIANTS 3**  
Todd Frazier hit a tiebreaking two-run homer in the eighth inning for host New York, which held on to beat San Francisco. The Mets won the rubber game of a three-game series for just the second time in eight tries this year. The Giants failed in their attempt to win back-to-back series for the first time in 2019. Pete Alonso led off the eighth by singling against Mark Melancon (2-1). Alonso was forced at second on a grounder by Michael Conforto, who stole second on Melancon's first pitch to Frazier. Three pitches later, Frazier reached for a low and outside pitch by Melancon and homered just beyond the left field wall.

## GOLF

# Koepka eyes historic US treble at Pebble Beach

'I KNOW THAT THE ODDS ARE AGAINST ME TO WIN IT'



Brooks Koepka of the United States greets fans during the first round of the RBC Canadian Open at the Hamilton Golf and Country Club on Thursday in Hamilton, Canada.

AFP  
Los Angeles

Brooks Koepka knows history is beckoning at the US Open at Pebble Beach — and that's just the kind of challenge to get the big-hitting American's juices flowing.

Koepka will arrive at the scenic course overlooking Carmel Bay with a chance to become just the second player to win three straight US Open titles — and the first to do it since Willie Anderson in 1903, '04 and '05. "The name has come up quite a bit in the last year," Koepka said of Anderson — who won four of five US Opens from 1901-05. "I know what I'm chasing and trying to accomplish."

Anyone who thinks the nature of the quest could throw Koepka off his stride hasn't been paying attention as he piled up four major titles in the space of eight starts — starting with a 2017 US Open triumph at Erin Hills.

He became the first player since Curtis Strange in 1988-89 to win two straight US Opens with his victory at Shinnecock Hills last year, and followed that with PGA Championship wins at Bellerive and, last month, at

Bethpage Black.

"There's no pressure," Koepka said as he prepared for his US Open tuneup at the Canadian Open. "I know that the odds are against me to win it."

"Every time (in a major), you've got 144 guys or 150 guys, whatever it is."

"There are a lot of people who can win that golf tournament. You've just got to go out and take care of business," he said.

Tiger Woods, who reignited his pursuit of Jack Nicklaus's record of 18 major titles when he took his tally to 15 at the Masters in April then missed the PGA Championship cut, enjoyed a building top-10 finish at the Memorial as he prepared to return to the scene of one of his most dominant victories.

Woods won the 2000 US Open at Pebble Beach by a record 15 strokes.

"It's impressive, to build that big of a lead and stay there, keep pushing," said Koepka, who saw his six-shot lead dwindle to one at Bethpage before he hoisted the Wanamaker Trophy.

"It's not as easy to extend that to 10 or eight as people might think," Koepka said.

Among the other contenders in the third major of the year, American Dustin Johnson boasts an outstanding track

record at Pebble Beach, where he has won the PGA Tour's National Pro-Am twice.

Johnson held the 54-hole lead in the 2010 US Open at Pebble that ultimately saw Graeme McDowell crowned, and said his runner-up finish at the PGA Championship only boosted his belief that he can add another major title to his 2016 US Open victory.

Phil Mickelson also brings a strong track record at Pebble Beach to his latest bid to capture an elusive Open title and complete a career Grand Slam.

The 48-year-old American notched his fifth National Pro-Am victory in February, but he acknowledges that chasing the longed-for Open title will be a different challenge.

"The difficulty is not the age," said Mickelson, who will turn 49 on the Sunday the Open concludes. "The difficulty is that when you're in your 20s you feel like you have multiple chances. And when you're turning 49, you're like, 'I've got two more chances — this year and maybe Winged Foot (in 2020) and that's about it."

"With that being the only one in the four that I haven't won, and what it would offer me and how I look at my career, I put more pressure on it," Mickelson said.

## Hot putter boosts Bradley

Ottawa: Keegan Bradley fired seven birdies in a seven-under-par 63 on Thursday to take the first-round lead at the US PGA Tour Canadian Open, last tune-up for the US Open at Pebble Beach.

Bradley made the most of favourable morning scoring conditions and finished the day with a one-shot lead over five players at Hamilton Golf and Country Club near Toronto.

"It was just solid top to bottom," said Bradley, the 2011 PGA Championship winner. "I hit almost every fairway, almost every green and then holed some putts."

"With me, it's all about the putter," added the American. "When that thing gets going I can do stuff like I did today." There are plenty of players within striking distance, starting with the group on 65 of Canadian Nick Taylor, Ireland's Shane Lowry, South Korean Im Sung-jae, South African Erik Van Rooyen and American Roberto Castro.

Lowry, coming off a tie for eighth at the PGA Championship at Bethpage Black, had seven birdies and one bogey.

Taylor, whose seven birdies included four in a row at the first through the fourth after he made the turn, was one of four Canadians within three shots of the lead — all trying to become the first golfer and trying to become the first Canadian to win the national championship since Pat Fletcher in 1954.

Im also teed off on 10, opening with back-to-back birdies and capping his round with his sixth birdie of the day at the ninth. Northern Ireland's Graeme McDowell, who will return to the site of his 2010 US Open win at Pebble Beach next week but still hasn't qualified for the British Open at Royal Portrush, was in a big group on five-under 65.

Bradley took a while to warm up, opening with six straight pars before exploding with six birdies in seven holes from the seventh through the 13th. He added one more at 17. "I was hitting a lot of good shots and I actually had a couple of pretty brutal lip outs," he said. "I just kept telling myself keep going, don't try to force these putts in and sure enough right after that they started going in."

## BOXING

## Pacquiao vows to thrash Thurman

AFP  
Manila

Philippine boxing legend Manny Pacquiao has vowed to silence Keith Thurman at their World Boxing Association title bout next month, calling him a "loudmouth" as their war of words escalates.

The run-up to the fight has been full of flying insults, with Thurman saying he will beat the 40-year-old Pacquiao into retirement when they clash in Las Vegas on July 20.

Thurman, 30, said last month he would "crucify" the world's only eight-division world champion, who the undefeated American said has "never fought anyone this young, strong and hungry".

"He's a loudmouth outside the ring. Let's see if he can back it up inside the ring," Pacquiao said yesterday as he trained in Manila.

"Some boxers are arrogant while other boxers are humble. Thurman? We know he's arrogant," added Pacquiao, the WBA's secondary "world" champion.

"I'm so motivated for this training camp because of his trash talk, like that. I would rather have my fists do the talking," Pacquiao said.

The Philippine legend's career seemed headed for its final moments last year, but he has since knocked out Lucas Matthisse and beat Adrien Broner in bouts.

Pacquiao plans to split his training camp between the Philippines and Los Angeles, wrapping up his preparations under the watchful eye of longtime trainer Freddie Roach, who is back in his corner.

He told reporters he will fly to Los Angeles on June 15.

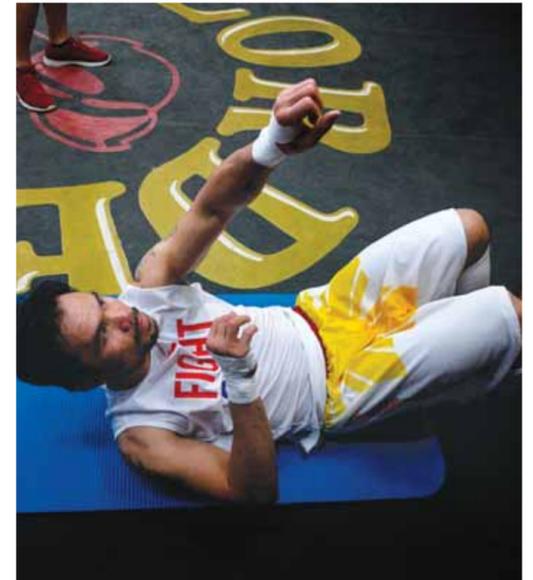
Thurman, who is 29-0 with 22 knockouts, has promised to beat Pacquiao's final opponent in the ring.

"His legacy ends on July 20. He's had a wonderful career, and been an inspiration. We all love him and respect him. And I'm respectfully going to kick the shit out of him."

But Pacquiao pointed out, after working the heavy bag on Thursday, that Thurman would not be the first younger challenger he has beaten.

"My last fight was (Adrien) Broner and he was only 29 years old. That's not a problem," he said Thursday.

Pacquiao, who is a member of the Philippines' upper house Senate, said he plans to fly back to Manila immediately after the Thurman fight to attend the annual address of his ally, President Rodrigo Duterte.



Philippine boxing icon Manny Pacquiao training at a gym in Manila, ahead of his World Boxing Association title bout next month against Keith Thurman in Las Vegas.

## SPOTLIGHT

## Japan swim queen Ikee gets leukaemia hospital respite

AFP  
Tokyo

Japanese Olympic swimming hope Rikako Ikee, who was diagnosed with leukaemia earlier this year, was last month temporarily discharged from hospital to enjoy some fresh air and time with her family, the athlete said this week on her official website.

The 18-year-old poster girl for next year's Tokyo Olympics revealed that she had been allowed to return home for a few days but has now been readmitted for further treatment.

"There are days I don't feel very well, when I just focus on getting through the day," posted Ikee, who shot to fame at last year's Asian Games where she won a record six gold medals.

"While I'm in hospital I stay motivated by setting goals for

myself after I'm discharged."

Ikee revealed in February that she had been diagnosed with leukaemia after experiencing problems during a training camp in Australia.

Japan's swim queen would have been a strong favourite to win 2020 Olympic gold in the 100 metres butterfly and a threat in the 200m freestyle in her home city.

Ikee's coach Jiro Miki said last weekend that she had begun light exercise on a stationary bike in her hospital room.

"While I was out of hospital I enjoyed meals with my family, relaxing and getting lots of fresh air," said Ikee, pictured on her website wearing a beanie hat to cover her hair loss.

"There are times I feel I don't want to go back into hospital," she added. "But I cheer myself up by thinking that it's just a few months of my life."



File photo of Japan's Rikako Ikee celebrating winning the 50m freestyle gold at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta.

## Woods confident heading into US Open

AFP  
Los Angeles

Tiger Woods, his 15th major secured at the Masters, is on the rise again heading into the US Open at Pebble Beach, scene of one of the US superstar's most dominant triumphs.

"My game is right where I feel like it needs to be," Woods said after firing a final-round 67 at the Memorial on Sunday.

"Each day I got a little more crisp," said Woods, who was out of the running for a sixth Memorial title heading into Sunday, but lit up the front nine with five birdies at Muirfield Village before coming home in even par to sneak into the top 10 — albeit 10 shots behind winner Patrick Cantlay.

"I was hoping I could get something positive going into the Open and I was able to accomplish that,"

said Woods, who opted not to play between his Masters victory and the PGA Championship at Bethpage Black where he missed the cut.

There's no doubt that Woods will be better prepared for the 119th US Open, which tees off on June 13 on the iconic California coastal course where he won by a record 15 strokes in 2000.

"I drove it great," Woods said of his week at Memorial, and that will be a key factor on the tight fairways at Pebble Beach. If he can tidy up a few things — he twice caught the lip of fairway bunkers and twice came away with bogeys at Muirfield's 14th despite having wedges in his hand — Woods was optimistic he could contend. "Those are loose things you can't afford to have happen in an Open," he said. "If I can clean those up, I should be all right."

Iron play remains a strength for the 43-year-old Woods, who led the

Masters field in greens in regulation.

"He always was the greatest iron player in the world," said 43-year-old US tour veteran Ryan Armour, who played alongside Woods in the third round last week. "But now he's hitting, like, controlled drivers and controlled three-woods."

"It's not lash at it and try and hit it as far as you can. I think he kind of checked that ego a little bit."

And added Armour: "All you've got to do is get him in the fairway and as good as his game is, he's going to play well."

Woods found 42 of 56 fairways at the Memorial, including 12 of 14 in the final round, a big improvement on his three of 14 fairways hit in the second round at Bethpage.

Woods, who tied for fourth in the 2010 US Open at Pebble Beach won by Northern Ireland's Graeme McDowell, last competed on the course at the PGA Tour's National Pro-Am.



WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

# Spain ready to climb their World Cup Everest

Germany, the reigning Olympic champions, are one of the favourites to lift the trophy in France

AFP  
Madrid

Spain will have to climb the equivalent of Mount Everest if they are to escape the hardest group of the Women's World Cup, according to their coach Jorge Vilda. A tough draw has placed Spain in Group B with Germany, China and South Africa, with the latter their first opponents in Le Havre today.

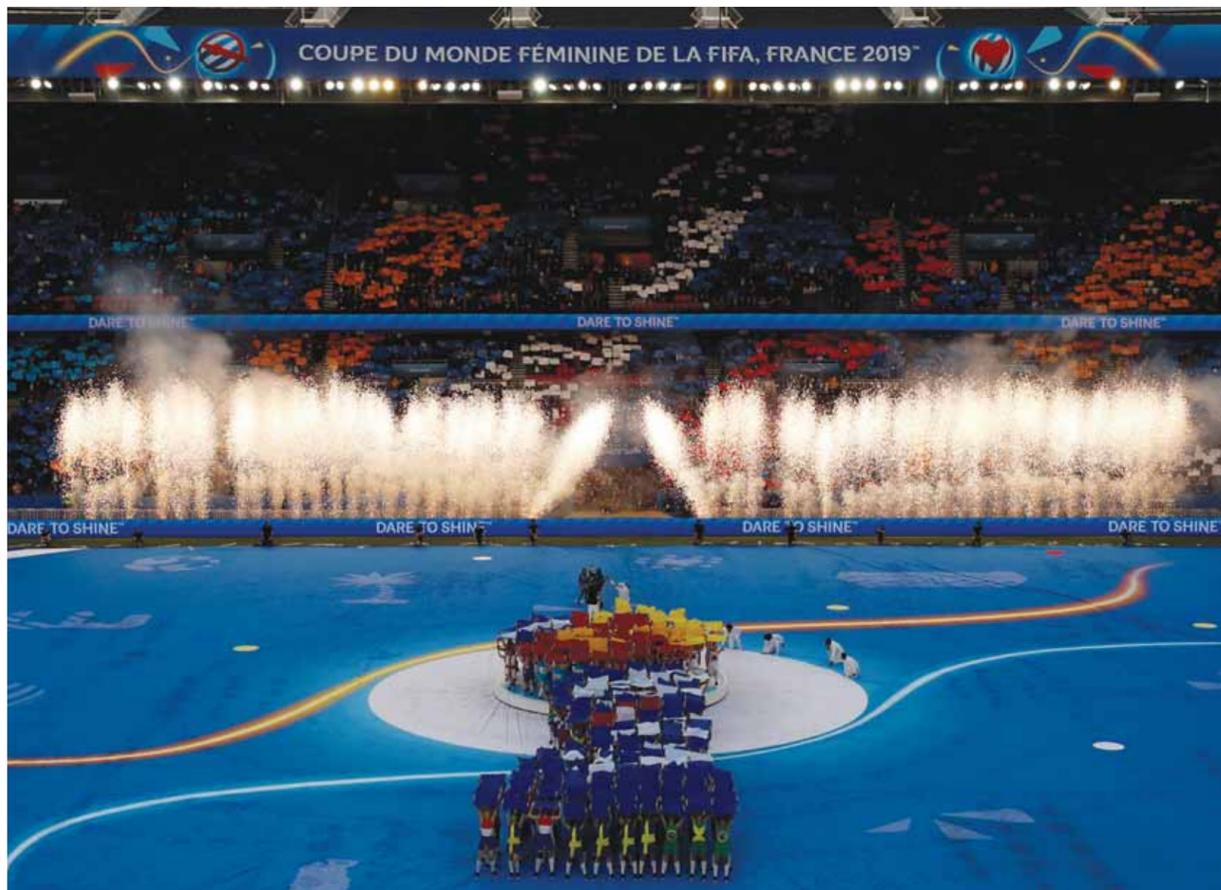
Germany, the reigning Olympic champions, are one of the favourites to lift the trophy in France, which kicked off yesterday, despite their coach Martina Voss-Tecklenburg only taking over in November. Meanwhile, South Africa and China both came within a whisker of winning the Africa Women's Cup of Nations and Asian Games respectively last year.

South Africa lost on penalties to Nigeria in the final while China were denied only by a last-minute goal from Japan. "I think we've been handed the hardest group of the tournament, and by far," Vilda said. "If I compared it to a mountain, it would be like climbing three summits, all of them over 8,000 metres. Germany can be the Everest of our group but South Africa and China are also playing at an extremely high level and it will be difficult to beat them."

"South Africa have so much speed going forward but they're also solid and disciplined. Germany is one of the favourites for the title and we have never managed to beat them. And then there is China, who have a fantastic team as well."

Spain enjoyed a perfect qualification campaign, winning all eight of their matches while conceding only two goals, but their difficult draw might not end in the groups, with the United States a potential foe in the last 16. They have also never reached the knock-out stage of a World Cup but success at youth levels has created a sense of optimism this summer, helped by some impressive results in friendlies.

In November, they held Germany to a goalless draw in Erfurt before narrowly losing to the United States and beating the Netherlands, Switzerland, Brazil and Cameroon. Asked about Spain's aims for the tournament, Vilda said: "To get through, to improve and to be a better team. We do not see the World Cup as an



Fireworks go off during the opening ceremony ahead of the Women's World Cup opening match between France and South Korea in Paris yesterday. (Reuters)

end in itself, it is an important part of a process of improvement for us but we have to see what happens.

"In these competitions, you have to keep a cool head and keep your feet on the ground because it's only our second World Cup after 2015. We are going into it with a lot of enthusiasm and excitement but we have to be cautious too. We have

raised expectations after our strong qualifying campaign and good performances in friendly games against great sides. We can't wait for the first match."

Women's football in Spain enjoyed unprecedented attention last season, as Barcelona reached their first Champions League final, two months after a European record crowd of 60,739 watched

them play Atletico Madrid at the Wanda Metropolitano.

Spain's squad is dominated by players from Barca and Atletico, who finished six points ahead of the Catalans to win La Liga last season, with third-placed Levante 21 points adrift of the top two. "We now have to develop the game more at youth level," said Vilda.

"We are doing well at the top but this pyramid needs to have a stronger base if we want the first and second divisions, as well as the regional leagues, to improve. We have to support the clubs and help them to establish better structures and pitches. Then to be among the best in the world, you just have to stay calm and wait for the talent to come through."

## Mancini calls for Italy to be fearless in Euro 2020 qualifiers

Athens: Italy coach Roberto Mancini encouraged his players to be fearless when pulling on the national team shirt ahead of a crucial Euro 2020 qualifying double-header against Greece and Bosnia. The Azzurri won their opening two qualifiers against Finland and Liechtenstein in March to go top of Group J on six points. Yet Mancini's side are likely to face much sterner tests with a trip to Athens today before the visit of Bosnia next Tuesday, with both sides breathing down Italy's neck after taking four points from their opening two games.

"We can show that our growth is continuing, we want to go out on the pitch to win," Mancini said. "The mentality of the players has been good from the first day, we can't go out to draw or with fear of losing. We are the Italian national team, even if we're coming off a very difficult period."

"These will be our two most difficult matches, but we want to keep going on our path, playing well and winning. Greece have changed the quality of their game on a technical level in the last few months. They've changed several things, when one cycle ends you need a bit of time to renew it. It's a bit like us."

Mancini is leading Italy through their first qualifying campaign since their failed bid to reach the 2018 World Cup. Under Gian Piero Ventura, the Italians fell to a 1-0 aggregate defeat to Sweden at the playoff stage, marking their first failure to reach the competition in 60 years.

Mancini, who succeeded Ventura in May 2018, believes that his players can use the memory of that World Cup disappointment to help them in their bid to book a place at next year's cross-continental European Championship finals.

"It hadn't happened for the last 60 years, it was a regret for everyone," Mancini said. "We must ensure that it never happens again. Italy must take part in the European Championships and the World Cup. For us it's an extra motivation."

FOCUS

## London-born Yennaris makes landmark China debut

AFP  
Guangzhou

"Proud" Nico Yennaris became the first foreign-born footballer to represent China when the former Arsenal reserve started in a 2-0 home win over the Philippines yesterday. The 26-year-old midfielder was born in London and is an England youth international, but his mother is Chinese and the country is looking to naturalise footballers to rapidly improve its fortunes on the pitch.

Yennaris, who never broke through at Premier League Arsenal, moved to Chinese Super League leaders Beijing Guoan at the start of the year and swapped nationalities from British to Chinese.

Known in China as Li Ke, there has been intense interest in his assimilation and he is having Mandarin lessons — he still gives interviews in English but appeared to have learnt the words to the national anthem.

Yennaris said that he was "very proud" to win his first cap for China. "I learnt that (the national anthem) when I first came so it's step by step. I'll continue my studies and hopefully in a few months I'll be able to do an interview in Chinese maybe."

The friendly against the Philippines in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou was also notable for the return as coach of Marcello Lippi. The 71-year-old Italian World Cup winner left the post at the end of January after a 3-0 defeat to Iran in the quarter-finals of the Asian Cup.

But following a failed stint by compatriot Fabio Cannavaro, Lippi is back at the helm and targeting qualification for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. Yennaris, who spent five years at Brentford in England's second tier before moving to Beijing, was among eight changes from the Lippi side beaten by Iran. The Philippines, ranked 124th in the world in FIFA's rankings, were obliging guests. China, ranked 74th but with big ambitions under football-fan President Xi Jinping, deservedly went ahead in the 14th minute when midfielder Wu Xi prodded past Denmark-born goalkeeper Michael Falkesgaard.

Midfielder Zhang Xizhe made it 2-0 on 54 minutes after more poor Philippine defending and Yennaris, who enjoyed a solid debut at the base of the hosts' midfield, was substituted a minute later.

The Philippines were reduced to 10 men soon after when Daisuke Sato earned a second yellow card. China host Tajikistan in another friendly on Tuesday as they build up to qualifiers for the 2022



China's Nico Yennaris controls the ball during the friendly match against the Philippines in Guangzhou, in China's southern Guangdong province, yesterday. (AFP)

World Cup. They begin in the autumn.

Lippi is reportedly eager to have the China-based Brazilian forwards Elkeson and Ricardo Goulart naturalised in time for them. However, while Chinese fans are supportive of Yennaris and gave him a warm reception on his debut, many have expressed deep scepticism about naturalising players who have no Chinese ancestry.

SPOTLIGHT

## Chelsea lodge appeal against transfer ban at CAS

AFP  
Lausanne

Chelsea lodged an appeal yesterday at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Switzerland against a transfer ban imposed by FIFA, the court said. In February, FIFA banned Chelsea from signing players for their men's teams for the next two transfer windows after FIFA's disciplinary committee found the club guilty of breaching regulations relating to the recruit-

ment of minors. Chelsea denied any wrongdoing and CAS said Friday the club had filed an appeal. "The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) has registered an appeal filed by Chelsea Football Club Ltd (CFC) against the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA)," CAS said in a statement, adding the club was appealing against the transfer ban.

Chelsea initially appealed to FIFA who partially lifted the ban in April, but only for players under 16 who are not "international transfers and first registrations of foreign minor players". That left Chelsea still unable to sign male play-

ers over the age of 16 when the summer transfer window opens.

Chelsea had been eager to have the ban lifted, or suspended pending an appeal, so they could be in a position to sign a replacement for Belgium's Eden Hazard, who is reportedly on the verge of a move to Spanish giants Real Madrid.

The chances of the appeal being heard before the close of the current transfer window are slim given the normal CAS timetable. "It is not possible to say at this time when the Arbitral Award will be issued," CAS said in their statement.

ROUND-UP

## Arsenal confirm forward Welbeck's exit

Arsenal forward Danny Welbeck has left the club at the end of his contract along with veteran goalkeeper Petr Cech and experienced defender Stephan Lichtsteiner. Welbeck's exit was expected after the England international's injury-ravaged spell at the Emirates Stadium, while Czech 'keeper Cech and Swiss international Lichtsteiner had previously hinted they would be leaving once their contracts expired.

Arsenal also announced youngsters Cohen Bramall, Charlie Gilmour, and Julio Pleguezuelo will leave the Gunners. Welbeck, 28, joined Arsenal from Manchester United during 2014 and went on to win the FA Cup under Arsene Wenger. Often utilised as an attacking option off the bench, Welbeck suffered a string of injury setbacks, the latest being a broken ankle against Sporting Lisbon in a Europa League tie on November 8.

Despite the striker's long-term future being in doubt, the club had not made any official comment, while Arsenal manager Unai Emery gave little away when asked. However, following the Gunners' final home match of the Premier League season against Brighton, Welbeck was honoured with a memento from Arsenal chairman Chips Keswick. Cech, 37, is widely rumoured to be returning to his former club Chelsea in a coaching role.

**MAN UNITED AGREE DEAL 'IN PRINCIPLE' TO SIGN DANIEL JAMES**  
Manchester United announced yesterday they



had agreed a deal 'in principle' to buy Swansea winger Daniel James, who is set to Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's first signing at the club. United will reportedly pay Swansea £18m (\$23m), including add-ons, for the 21-year-old Wales international. The Championship club said the transfer was expected to be formally completed on Tuesday.

**SUPER SUB HWANG GIVES SOUTH KOREA WIN OVER AUSTRALIA**  
Substitute Hwang Ui-jo pounced on a deflection to give South Korea a 1-0 home win in

their friendly against Australia yesterday, breaking the deadlock in a stodgy match that had seemed destined for a draw. Six of Hwang's seven international goals have come in the past 15 matches, all under Portuguese boss Paulo Bento.

The Socceroos almost took an early lead in Busan in the 18th minute when Mitchell Duke tried to power home a Brandon O'Neill corner, but saw his header come off the right post. The game then settled into stalemate, with Tottenham star Son Heung-min — on international duty less than a week after his Champions League final loss to Liverpool — unable to inspire a lacklustre attack past a physical Australian defence.

### KANTE OUT OF FRANCE'S EURO QUALIFIERS WITH KNEE INJURY

Chelsea midfielder N'Golo Kante will miss France's upcoming Euro 2020 qualifiers against Turkey and Andorra due to a knee injury, the French Football Federation (FFF) has said. Kante was injured in training before Chelsea faced Arsenal in last week's Europa League final but played the full 90 minutes as his side beat their London rivals 4-1.

The 28-year-old was also in France's squad for their 2-0 victory over Bolivia in a friendly international in Nantes on Sunday but did not play. France, who currently top Group H after both their qualifiers so far, play Turkey in Konya today before facing Andorra three days later. Albania, Iceland and Moldova are the other teams in the group.

## NATIONS LEAGUE

# England must learn from painful Dutch defeat: Southgate

The Netherlands outclass England to reach Nations League final



The Netherlands' Matthijs de Ligt (left) scores against England in the Nations League semi-final at Estadio D Afonso Henriques in Guimaraes, Portugal, on Thursday. (Reuters)

AFP

Guimaraes, Portugal

England manager Gareth Southgate promised his side would learn from an error-strewn performance as the Netherlands progressed to the final of the Nations League by coming from behind to beat the Three Lions 3-1 on Thursday night.

Defeat means England's long wait for a trophy since 1966 goes on and the Dutch thoroughly deserved their place in tomorrow's final against Portugal. Marcus Rashford's penalty gave England a first-half lead against the run of play, but Matthijs de Ligt made amends for his error in leading to the spot-kick to level 17 minutes from time.

England contributed to their own downfall in extra-time with a comedy of errors for both goals. John Stones and Ross Barkley were at fault as Kyle Walker's own goal and Quincy Promes's simple finish sent Holland into the final.

Southgate's men were attempting to

build on the success of reaching a first World Cup semi-final for 28 years, but their display showed much work is still to be done if they are to end their trophy drought on next summer at Euro 2020 with the semi-finals and final to be played on home soil at Wembley. "I think it's a really important game for us to reflect on," said Southgate. "The next few days will be painful having got to this stage, but we will be stronger for the experience."

Southgate defended his decision to leave out all seven of the Champions League finalists in his squad from Tottenham and Liverpool as captain Harry Kane and Jordan Henderson were left on the bench. And the England boss also insisted his side must persist with passing the ball out from the back despite the criticism that is bound to come from Stones and Barkley's way.

"If we didn't play that way we would never progress to be a top team," said Southgate. "That's the way I believe they can play and should play. The errors were uncharacteristic, it was just poor execu-

tion and fatigue. I've got to not overreact to those things and support them in a difficult moment for everybody."

The Netherlands failed to even qualify for the last two major tournaments. However, the young talent that has seen a dramatic turnaround in their fortunes was in evidence with Barcelona-bound Frenkie de Jong outstanding in midfield.

"I heard he was player of the match tonight, well deserved," said Netherlands boss Ronald Koeman. "Most of the people are always looking what he is doing with the ball, how calm he is, but if you see defensive wise how many balls he is winning in midfield. It looks so easy, but it isn't."

De Ligt also looks set to leave Ajax with a host of top European clubs after his signature, but he had a moment to forget just after the half-hour mark. The 19-year-old failed to control a simple pass and then chopped down Rashford, who picked himself up to slot home the resulting penalty.

However, De Ligt showed great character to make amends by powering home a

header from a corner as the Netherlands' pressure finally told. "We dropped too deep and it took them to equalise for us to step it up again," lamented Kane.

Just when there seemed only one winner, England produced their best move of the game as Stones, Ben Chilwell, Barkley and Raheem Sterling moved the ball from one end to the other before Jesse Lingard slotted home.

The celebrations were cut short, though, when the Manchester United midfielder was ruled offside by the finest of margins after a VAR review. Memphis Depay and Donny van de Beek blazed over fine Dutch chances to win the game before extra-time, but the Netherlands finally took complete control in the extra 30 minutes.

England inflicted much of the damage themselves as Stones dallied on the ball and after Jordan Pickford made a great save to deny Depay, Promes's follow-up deflected in off Walker. Barkley's under-hit backpass then teed up a third for the Dutch as Depay squared for Promes to slot into an empty net.

## SPOTLIGHT

## We played a good game against Brazil: Qatar captain al-Haydos

By Sports Reporter

Doha

Qatar captain Hassan al-Haydos said he was pleased with the team's performance in the 0-2 loss to Brazil in the international friendly on Wednesday. Al Annabi put in a spirited show against the mighty South Americans, who had the likes of Neymar, Dani Alves, Philippe Coutinho and Gabriel Jesus playing for them.

After trailing by two goals in the first half four, Qatar created few chances and they also missed a penalty in the dying stages. "We played a good game against Brazil. After going behind, we made a good comeback. Brazil scored two goals due to some minor lapses," al-Haydos said.

The 28-year-old midfielder was confident Qatar can put a good show in the Copa America, which will begin from June 14 in Brazil. He said the loss against Brazil will not have any effect on the players, but would only help them in the big tournament.

"That loss to Brazil will not have any impact on our preparation for the Copa America. The level of this team will only go up after this match. We are confident of doing well in the Copa. The Brazil was undoubtedly a difficult one for us as they have many world class players. Playing against them in front of such

a passionate Brazil crowd meant a lot for the players. It has increased our confidence. We only learn from our mistakes from the match against Brazil," al-Haydos said.

Felix Sanchez's men will next play a closed-doors match against a Brazilian club side tomorrow. In the Copa America, Qatar in Group B, which includes Argentina, Colombia and Paraguay. They face Paraguay on June 16 followed by a match against Colombia on June 19 and Argentina on June 23.

Meanwhile, Sanchez showered praise on his team. "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," the Spanish coach said.

Sanchez 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."



Qatar captain Hassan al-Haydos (right) and his Brazilian counterpart Dani Alves vie for the ball during the International Friendly match in Brasilia on Wednesday.

## NEW INNINGS

## Ozil marries, with Erdogan as best man

AFP

Istanbul

Former German international footballer Mesut Ozil got married in Istanbul yesterday with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as his best man. The 30-year-old Ozil, who has Turkish family roots, sparked controversy last year when he was photographed with Erdogan, raising questions about the footballer's loyalty to Germany on the eve of their disastrous 2018 World Cup campaign.

The Turkish leader arrived in the early evening for yesterday's ceremony at a luxury hotel on the banks of the Bosphorus to see the former Arsenal midfielder marry his fiancée, former Miss Turkey Amine Gulse. A smiling Erdogan and his wife Emine were seen standing next to the young couple as their marriage was formalised.

After 92 appearances for Germany, including a key role in the 2014 World Cup victory, Ozil suddenly quit the national squad last July, accusing German football officials of racism. Ozil announced in March that he had asked Erdogan to be his best man. German Chancellor Angela Merkel's chief of staff was part of a chorus of criticism of the invitation.

Helge Braun, a CDU told the *Bild* newspaper then that it "makes one sad" that Ozil would make a such a move despite having



Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan (second right) and his wife Emine (right) pose with Arsenal's German player Mesut Ozil and his wife Amina Gulse during their wedding ceremony in Istanbul yesterday. (AFP)

already been sharply criticised by the German public over his first meeting with Erdogan.

Ozil has dated Gulse since 2017 and the couple announced their engagement in June 2018. The footballer, a third-generation German, whipped up a political storm when he was pictured alongside Erdogan last May. Criticism intensified after the red-faced defending champions crashed out of the first round of the World Cup in Russia.

In the wake of the World Cup fiasco, Ozil

announced his resignation from the national squad, saying: "I am German when we win, an immigrant when we lose." Erdogan often attends marriages in Turkey of celebrities, whom he particularly seeks out during election campaigns.

His presence at Ozil's marriage comes ahead of a mayoral election in Istanbul on June 23, required after the original voting in March was annulled following a narrow victory for the main opposition Republican People's Party.

## FOCUS

## Willian to replace Neymar in Brazil's Copa America squad

AFP

Rio de Janeiro

Chelsea's Willian will replace Neymar in Brazil's Copa America squad, the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) said yesterday, after the world's most expensive player was sidelined by injury.

Willian, 30, was a surprise choice as the country's media had tipped Real Madrid youngster Vinicius Junior and Tottenham's Lucas Moura as the front-runners to take the Paris Saint-Germain forward's place.

"In accordance with competition rules, CBF sent Conmebol the medical reports of Neymar's injury. After receiving permission, the player (Willian) was summoned," the CBF said in a statement.

Willian, who has played for Chelsea since 2013, represented Brazil at the last two World Cups and was a substitute in the Blues' 4-1 win over Arsenal in the Europa League final on May 29. He has made 65 appearances for the Selecao with his last international match coming in November's friendly victory over Cameroon. Neymar was ruled out of the Copa America after spraining his ankle during the 2-0 win over Qatar in a friendly on Wednesday, capping a nightmare year for the world's most expensive player.

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. PSG said on Thursday the star striker would be reassessed by the club's medics within "72 hours to define the rehabilitation process and recovery time for the player".

