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BASKETBALL | Page 4

Spain squeeze into quarters with no-frills win over Italy



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Roglic tightens grip on Vuelta lead as Pogacar wins stage 13

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Saturday, September 7, 2019
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GULF TIMES SPORT

TENNIS

Serena's path to Grand Slam record blocked by teenager

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FOOTBALL

Big victory against Afghans a boost, says Sanchez

Qatar take on India in their second Group E qualifier on Tuesday in Doha



Qatar's coach Felix Sanchez (R) talks to his forward Ahmed Alaaeldin on the sideline during the team's match against Afghanistan at the Jassim bin Hamad Stadium in Doha on Thursday.

AFC
Doha

Qatar coach Felix Sanchez believes his side has been given a major boost following Thursday's comfortable 6-0 victory against Afghanistan in Group E of the Asian Qualifiers for the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar and AFC Asian Cup China 2023. A hat-trick from this year's AFC Asian Cup MVP and Golden boot winner Al-moez Ali as well as goals from Hassan al-Haydos, Abdulkarim Hassan and Boualem

Khoukhi at the Jassim bin Hamad Stadium gave Asia's reigning champions a perfect start to their campaign. "We achieved our target today which is to get a victory and the three points in the opening match of the qualifiers," said Sanchez. "The victory today was very important especially that it is our first match in the qualifiers and it will give the team a big boost in the next matches." "My players deserve to be congratulated following their impressive performance and their big determination to win the match right from the beginning as they

showed the true image to be Asian champions," he added. Qatar's next test will be against India on Tuesday, and while the West Asians will be hoping to claim a second victory, Sanchez has declared that their opponents will not be easy to beat. "It will be a totally different match," said Sanchez about India. "I think each match is different than the other but our aim is similar which is to win and get the three points." Meanwhile, Afghanistan head coach Anoush Dastgir was disappointed with the defeat, but praised his players for their performance.

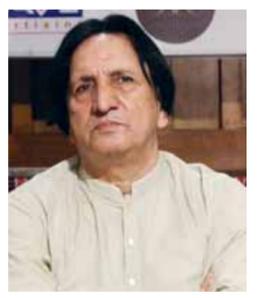
"We tried to have a good performance and return home with a positive result but our opponents were too strong," said Dastgir. "Despite the big defeat, I'm proud with what the players showed today as they gave their best," he added. "Our opponents were a strong team and they are the Asian champions," he said. "We can't compare our team to Qatar and I warned the players that the start of the match would be very critical. "Hopefully we can learn from the mistakes before our next game against Bangladesh," he concluded.

LOSS

Former Pakistan leg-spinner Qadir dies aged 63

AFP
Lahore, Pakistan

Former Pakistan spinner **Abdul Qadir**, credited for reviving the art of leg-spin bowling in 1970s and 80s, died of a heart attack in his hometown Lahore, his son told AFP yesterday. "My father never had a heart problem so it was sudden and shocking that he suffered a severe attack and could not survive," Salman Qadir told AFP. Qadir, who would have turned 64 on September 15, was one of favourites of former captain Imran Khan — now Pakistan's prime minister. Qadir made his Test debut against England in 1977 and went on to play 67 Tests, taking 236 wickets with a best of 9-65 against England at the same venue in 1987. Those figures are still the best by a Pakistan bowler in a Test innings. He also took 132 wickets in 104 one-day internationals, with Imran using him as an attacking weapon in the 1983 World Cup held in England. He played last of his international matches in 1993. Qadir's unique dancing action was as attractive as it was destructive, spinning the ball prodigiously and had a lethal googly and a flipper. Legendary Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne — the second highest Test wicket taker with 708 (only behind Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan's 800) — was also a big fan of Qadir. Khan said he was saddened to hear about Qadir death.



"I am sad to hear about Qadir's death," Khan said in a message. "With his death I have lost a close friend and a team-mate and that's hurtful. "Qadir brightened Pakistan's name in cricket the world over and we will always remember (him) as a great player." Former Pakistan captains Wasim Akram, Moin Khan, Rashid Latif and Waqar Younis led the condolences, saying Qadir's death was "a great loss of Pakistan cricket." "We have lost a great man who was an institution in himself," said Wasim who played alongside Qadir in the 1980s. Qadir was particularly dominating against England's batsmen in the 1987 home series, claiming a Pakistan record of 30 wickets in three Tests. Qadir also served as chief selector of Pakistan and was running a private academy in Lahore. His four sons Rehman Qadir, Imran Qadir, Sulaman Qadir and Usman Qadir all played first-class cricket while his daughter Noor is married to Pakistan international Umar Akmal.

BOTTOMLINE

Long jump great Powell named Doha 2019 Worlds ambassador

World long jump record-holder and two-time world champion **Mike Powell** has been named an ambassador for the IAAF World Athletics Championships Doha 2019. With three weeks to go to the IAAF's premiere showcase event, set for September 27 to October 6, Powell said he can't wait for action to get underway at the Qatari capital's state-of-the-art Khalifa Stadium. "I'm very excited to be attending my 11th World Championships: three of those as an athlete and eight as an IAAF Ambassador," said Powell, whose appearance at the 1991 edition in Tokyo, his first at a World Championships, resulted in one of the most legendary long jump competitions of all time. In Tokyo, Powell prevailed in a classic head-to-head brawl against long-time rival Carl Lewis, sailing 8.95m in the fifth round to break Bob Beamon's vaunted



8.90m world record, set nearly 23 years earlier at the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City. Powell's record has now stood even longer, passing the test of time. He successfully defended his title two years later in Stuttgart and took bronze in 1995, his final appearance at the World Championships. In the ensuing 28 years since he broke the world record, only two jumpers have come within 21 centimetres of his mark: Erick Walder in 1994 and Dwight Phillips

in 2009, when they sailed 8.74m. But over the past 15 months, Cuban sensation Juan Miguel Echevarria has electrified the event with wind-assisted jumps of 8.92m (+3.9m/s) and 8.83m (+2.1m/s), performances produced before he celebrated his 21st birthday, illustrating that he could be the jumper to finally unseat Powell as the event's standard-bearer. "I'm obviously looking forward to the long jump as Echevarria has said that he may be going for my record after his impressive showing in Zurich of 8.65m," Powell said. "But also, the 400m hurdles, both men and women, the 200m, the 400m. There are so many things to follow, I can't wait!" Powell joins multiple world and Olympic decathlon champion Ashton Eaton and Brianne Theisen-Eaton, the 2016 world indoor pentathlon champion, as an ambassador for the championships' 17th edition. (IAAF)

Ronaldo in 162mn euro Nike deal: Football Leaks



Paris: Five-time Ballon d'Or winner **Cristiano Ronaldo** will earn 162mn euros (\$139mn) from his contract with Nike, documents in the latest Football Leaks revelation carried by *Der Spiegel* magazine showed yesterday. His most recent deal, which is to run until 2026, also included a bonus of four mn euros for winning the individual award, according to a draft contract. Ronaldo, who joined Juventus in 2018, after trophy-laden spells with Real Madrid and Manchester United, has had a contract with the US cloth-

ing giant since 2004 which "guaranteed him a base fee of 3.65 mn euros." "For as long as Ronaldo plays for a Category A club, he was to be paid 16.2 mn euros each year," the German publication said. Nike responded to the reports saying: "We do not comment on athlete contracts." The best-paid German included in the report, Arsenal midfielder Mesut Ozil, earns 1.2mn euros a year from Adidas. The figure dropped by 800,000 euros after he retired from international football in 2018.



REACTION

Coach Stimac rues India's one-man attack after defeat

'WE COULD'VE PUNISHED THE OMANI TEAM HEAVILY IN THE FIRST HALF'

Reuters
New Delhi

India's over-reliance on forward Sunil Chhetri and the team's inexperience cost them their Asian qualifying tie for the 2022 World Cup against Oman, coach Igor Stimac rued after the 2-1 loss on Thursday.

Udanta Singh hit the crossbar and Sandesh Jhingani's header missed the mark before the talismanic Chhetri's 24th-minute strike put the hosts ahead in the group E match in the east Indian city of Guwahati.

India dominated the first half but looked jaded in the second though they held on to their slender lead until the 82nd minute.

Rabia Alawi al-Mandhar then conjured up a brace to give Oman the three points and a dejected Stimac felt they could have killed off the contest in the first half itself.

"We're very sad. We deserved more from this game," the Croat, who was appointed India coach in May, said after the match.

"We could've punished the Omani team heavily in the first half, we could have killed the game before the break, but we were not lucky there.

"You see all of our goals come from Sunil but he cannot score every time..."

India are currently ranked 103 in the world by FIFA and the cricket-mad country of 1.3 billion are yet to qualify for the World Cup finals.

Stimac said he was proud of the team's display except in the last 20 minutes when they surrendered the lead.

"Our only mistake was running with the through ball too quick and losing the ball," said the 51-year-old, who was part of the



India's players celebrate after scoring a goal during FIFA World Cup qualifier match between India and Oman at Indira Gandhi Athletics Stadium, in Guwahati on Thursday. At bottom, coach Igor Stimac.

Croatia team who finished third at the 1998 World Cup in France.

"When you are leading, you need to keep passing the ball, keeping the ball and making the opponent run and chase and not losing the ball after three seconds. That was the difference.

"It's about experience. My players were fit, in fact fitter than Oman, but they were more experienced."

India face a tougher task in their next match when they take on Asian Cup champions Qatar on Tuesday but Stimac said his team were neither intimidated nor down on motivation for the match in Doha.

"It's not going to be easy, we know that. Qatar is different, the



strongest team here but that's a good game in front of us.

"Obviously we need to change four-five players for that game. No reason to have a fear going there. We will try to play good football and try to score goals."

Stimac said despite the defeat by Oman, he saw bright future for his side which would only get better with experience.

"It's a new Indian team, absolutely different from before... we have many more options now. It's not just 13-14 payers anymore, this is very good.

"The time will come when we are not going to lose game like this. We're going to kill those games in the first half. For that we need to work very hard."

SPOTLIGHT

Ireland grab late draw with Swiss as Danes close gap



Ireland striker David McGoldrick celebrates after scoring against Switzerland in Dublin on Thursday.

Reuters
Dublin

David McGoldrick's first international goal grabbed Ireland a potentially crucial 1-1 draw in their Euro 2020 qualifier with Switzerland on Thursday as an easy victory for rivals Denmark in Gibraltar kept things incredibly tight at the top of Group D.

Fabian Schar looked like he had won it for the visitors on 74 minutes when he finished off a brilliantly worked team goal but just as they did in Copenhagen in June, Ireland secured a point near the death thanks to McGoldrick's 85th-minute header.

"We're not the best team in the group but I'll tell you what, you're going to have to put us down before we give up," Ireland manager Mick McCarthy told a news conference, likening the atmosphere at the Aviva Stadium to his days as captain under Jack Charlton's Irish team of 30 years ago.

"We've got a point against a very good side, who for periods of that game were better than us, a team full of very good players playing from good clubs... (My) players just keep going, they give me everything. They're absolutely brilliant."

The draw kept McCarthy's men on top of the group with 11 points from five games, three ahead of Denmark, who have one game in hand and a much better goal difference. Ireland are six points clear of the Swiss, who have played two fewer.

In Gibraltar, Denmark were easy 6-0 winners thanks to two Christian Eriksen penalties, a Christian Gytkjaer brace from open play and one each for Robert Skov and Thomas Delaney.

Ireland, who had the easier start of the three contending sides grabbing six points against Gibraltar and a home win over Georgia, created the two best chances in the first half against their more dangerous-looking opponents.

Winger James McClean should have done better early on after being put through following nice link-up play by Callum Robinson and Jeff Hendrick while McGoldrick should have found his Sheffield United team mate Robinson with a ball across the face of the goal just before the break.

Switzerland, without Xherdan Shaqiri who asked not to be selected to concentrate on his club football at Liverpool, continued to press intermittently early in the second half but were getting little change from Ireland's centre-half pairing of Richard Keogh and Shane Duffy.

When they finally got a clear chance after some slick play in the box, Brael Embolo slipped and fell on his backside with the goal seemingly at his mercy and the ball dribbled harmlessly wide.

There only looked like one winner at that point though as the Borussia Moenchengladbach man nearly made up for his slip before Newcastle defender Schar struck, the culmination of some brilliant one

Results

Group D

At Bucharest
Republic of Ireland 1 (McGoldrick 85) Switzerland 1 (Schar 74)
At Gibraltar
Gibraltar 0 Denmark 6 (Skov 6, Eriksen 34-pen, 50-pen, Delaney 69, Gytkjaer 73, 78)

Group F

At Bucharest
Romania 1 (Andone 59) Spain 2 (Ramos 29-pen, Alcaraz 47)

At Oslo

Norway 2 (Berge 34, King 45+1-pen) Malta 0

At Torshavn

Faroe Islands 0 Sweden 4 (Isak 12, 15, Lindelof 23, Quaison 41)

Group G

At Beer Sheva
Israel 1 (Zahavi 55) North Macedonia 1 (Ademi 64)

Group J

At Yerevan
Armenia 1 (Karapetyan 11) Italy 3 (Belotti 28, 80, Pellegrini 77)

At Tampere
Finland 1 (Pukki 52-pen)

Greece 0

At Zenica
Bosnia & Herzegovina 5 (Gozak 11, 89, Malin 80-og, Dzeko 85, Visca 87) Liechtenstein 0

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PREVIEW

Oxlade-Chamberlain relishes England return after injury woe

AFP
London

Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain is relishing his return to the England squad after realising how much the national team mean to their fans during his injury lay-off.

Oxlade-Chamberlain has missed England's last three appearances at major tournaments through injury, but he is finally fit and has been named in the squad for today's Euro 2020 qualifier against Bulgaria and next week's clash against Kosovo.

The Liverpool midfielder would dearly love to feature if England qualify for next year's European Championships, because his time on the sidelines gave him a fresh perspective of how the nation lives and breathes Three Lions campaigns.

When Gareth Southgate's team went to Russia for their run to the World Cup semi-finals last year, he was ruled out by a serious knee injury.

But Oxlade-Chamberlain didn't turn his back on the side and watched one of their matches against Belgium from a Boxpark bar in east London.

Attempting to go undercover in glasses and a hat, Oxlade-Chamberlain was quickly recognised but he embraced the moment and the fans' passion.

"That was the first time I've ever watched a match with fans of my team, if that makes sense,"



England's Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain speaks to the media during a press conference.

Oxlade-Chamberlain told reporters at England's training base.

"I'm either always in the stadium or at home. I was shocked. I've never been to a pub where there's a bunch of Liverpool fans or Arsenal fans and watched it with them, never been to a pub with England fans to see what it means to them and it was surreal.

"I could see my mates on the screen doing what I usually do and how everyone around them

was reacting. I was almost idolising them as well. Just seeing what they were doing and what that created around me I was like, 'Oh my God, do I really do that?'

"What it created was special. To see that first hand, in that environment, wasn't what I expected. It was a moment where I realised - I can't swear - I've missed out on something big here. Seeing what it meant to people.

"People rushing in from work

with their shirts and ties on, it was like the whole nation was watching. I met a couple of doctors there, a couple of boys from the city, a couple of plumbers; all came into Boxpark.

"It was just mayhem and meant so much to everyone. I'd never seen that first hand, so it was really special and a reminder of what it means to play for England and how special that is."

Southgate's men are firmly favoured to reach Euro 2020 after

winning their opening two qualifiers and Oxlade-Chamberlain admits he is already dreaming of playing in the event, which will be staged in a host of countries across Europe including England.

"That would be great. I think the boys did themselves proud to create the environment where people have more belief and more of a connection with this young set of players," he said.

Oxlade-Chamberlain has made two starts for Liverpool this season, the 26-year-old showing signs he is finally back to his best after damaging cruciate and medial knee ligaments in a 2018 Champions League semi-final victory over Roma.

His fitness issues have robbed him off two Champions League final appearances with Liverpool, but helping England win Euro 2020 would make amends.

"I think it's written in the stars for me to score the winner at Euro 2020," he said with a smile.

"I guess I have been unlucky with the timings of my injuries but I have been lucky enough to play 32 times for England and looking at the squad now I am one of the longest-serving players.

"Both Arsenal and Liverpool have given me a platform to play for England, so I consider that lucky too.

"The timing of the injuries was unlucky but boys have injuries that stop them playing full stop. I have had the opportunity to come back."

US OPEN

Williams' path to Grand Slam record blocked by teenager

'She really knows how to mix up the game and play different shots in different ways'



Serena Williams of the US plays against Elina Svitolina of Ukraine during their semi-finals match at the 2019 US Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York on Thursday. (AFP)

Reuters
New York

A clash of generations will decide the US Open today with Serena Williams taking a fourth crack at Grand Slam history against teenager Bianca Andreescu, who was not even born when the American lifted her first Flushing Meadows trophy.

One short of equalling Margaret Court's record of 24 singles Grand Slam titles, Williams will be hoping that the fourth time is the charm after three agonising near misses since returning to action following the birth of her first child.

Already the oldest Grand Slam finalist in the Open era, Williams will celebrate her 38th birthday in three weeks while her 19-year-old Canadian opponent will not be able to celebrate a victory with a drink at New York City bar for two more years.

"It is just surreal I don't know what to say it is a dream come true to play Serena in the finals of the US Open," said Andreescu following her 7-6(3) 7-5 semi-fi-

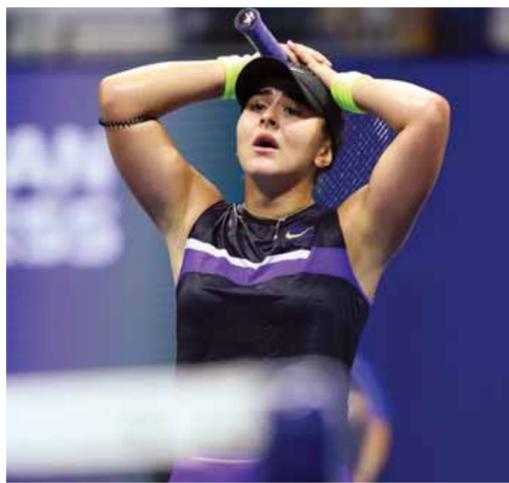
nal win over Swiss Belinda Bencic on Thursday. "It's crazy."

At the end of last year Andreescu sat an anonymous 178th in the world rankings and lost in the first round of US Open qualifying. Today she will step out onto Arthur Ashe Stadium tipped by many as the heir to Williams' crown as the queen of women's tennis.

Just the second Canadian woman after Eugenie Bouchard to play in a Grand Slam final, Andreescu has rarely looked out of place on the big stage. Her breakout season has seen her already win two of the WTA Tour's elite events in Indian Wells and Toronto while her run to the US Open final has only confirmed her status as the next big thing.

More remarkably the 19-year-old is playing in just her fourth main draw at a Grand Slam having never before ventured beyond the second round.

The final will pit power against power with Andreescu having demonstrated she is well equipped to go toe-to-toe with the game's big hitters and few in the history of the sport have delivered more punishment from



Bianca Andreescu of Canada reacts to a straight sets victory in her semi-final against Belinda Bencic of Switzerland at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center on Thursday. (Getty Images/AFP)

the baseline than Williams.

The two have met just once before in the final of the Rogers Cup in August but there is little

to be gleaned from the encounter with Williams quitting with back spasms while down 3-1 in the opening set.

"She really knows how to mix up the game and play different shots in different ways," said Williams assessing her opponent. "She's a great player."

"You never know what is going to come from her. She serves well, moves well, has a ton of power. She's very exciting to watch."

The atmosphere inside Arthur Ashe Stadium today is sure to be supercharged with memories of last year's chaotic and controversial final, that saw Naomi Osaka's victory overshadowed by an explosive confrontation between chair umpire Carlos Ramos and an enraged Williams, hanging in the air.

That match saw Williams deducted a point and later a game for her behaviour, which included a smashed racket and calling Ramos a "liar" and "thief".

Williams has done her best to pretend last year's events never happened. At her first press conference Williams said she did not know a Carlos Ramos and on Thursday, when asked if she had learned any lessons from last year, batted the question answering: "It hasn't really crossed my mind".

FOCUS

Bencic takes positive outlook after dropping US Open semi

AFP
New York

Belinda Bencic won't become the first Swiss woman to win a Grand Slam title in 20 years at the US Open, but she adopted a positive outlook after a tough loss.

Canadian teen Bianca Andreescu won the last five games to defeat Bencic 7-6 (7/3), 7-5 in a semi-final Thursday to book a Saturday showdown with 23-time Grand Slam champion Serena Williams for the title.

Bencic quickly took an optimistic attitude after her first Slam semi-final appearance, which ensured her return to the top 10 in the world rankings for the first time since February 2016.

"Very much disappointed. After every loss, you are. That's no surprise," Bencic said. "But overall really we talk with the team just now. What we reach here, semi-final, it's my best result by far. We should definitely not take this for granted and be grateful for that."

"I think that put me in a more positive mood."

Not since Martina Hingis won the 1999 Australian Open has a Swiss woman captured a Slam singles crown.

Bencic reached the 2014 US Open quarter-final but was hit with injuries from 2016 to 2018, notably needing left wrist surgery in 2017.

Bencic's ranking fell to 318th but her long road back saw her win at Dubai in February and achieve more than she imagined during the Flushing Meadows fortnight.

"Definitely, like, positively, for sure we reached I think more than I expected here," Bencic said. "I think my best result. Really, I'm taking it step by step. Just really happy and positive about it."

Bencic missed six break chances in the first set and while she broke three times in the second set, Andreescu broke her four.

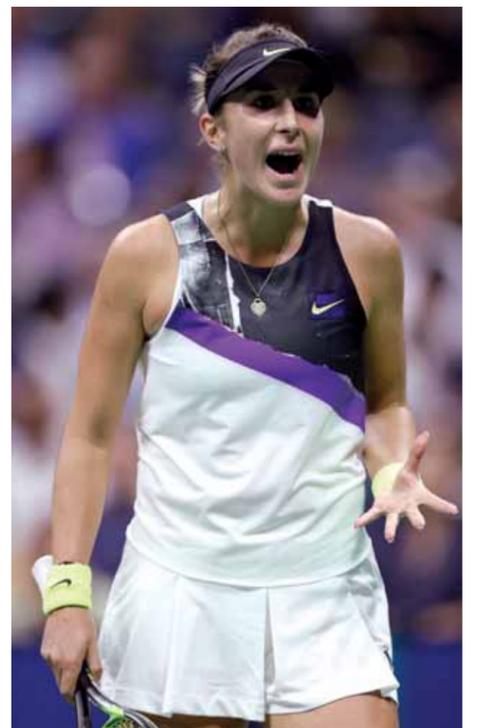
"Overall I just think it was a big fight, a big battle," Bencic said. "I think it was very tactical. Bianca plays smart. I think I can play smart or like try to make a right tactic."

"In the end, it was really just about some points that turned everything around. Also in the second set, I think I had so many break chances which I didn't use. But I think she played the best on them. I think it's very tough to win a set if you cannot use all these chances."

"She definitely played the big points better than me. I think that's the whole tennis difference."

While Bencic takes away good feelings for her effort, her semi-final loss won't be one she studies to help her game.

"I will not watch it. Just talk about it," she said. "Just take some time for sure. When the emotions go away, then for sure talk about it, learn out of it."



Belinda Bencic of Switzerland reacts to a lost point to Bianca Andreescu of Canada during their US Open semi-final in New York City on Thursday. (Getty Images/AFP)

SPOTLIGHT

Svitolina searches for answers after semi rout

AFP
New York

Elina Svitolina has lifted her game to reach the semi-finals of the past two Grand Slam tournaments, but lopsided losses in both have left the Ukrainian standout searching for answers.

Serena Williams, chasing her 24th Grand Slam title to match Margaret Court's all-time record, routed Svitolina 6-3, 6-1 on Thursday to reach today's championship match.

That followed a 6-1, 6-3 drubbing at Wimbledon by eventual champion Simona Halep and together they have left Svitolina of two minds about her Slam breakthroughs.

"For sure last two Slams been good for me. I'm very happy the way I could handle the tough moments," she said.

"Unfortunately it's both times finished really one-sided, which

I have to analyse. "I have to sit down with my coach, I have to work a lot mentally on how I have to handle those kind of matches. That's where you have to really step up your game."

A week shy of her 25th birthday, Svitolina will rise to third in the world rankings on Monday, matching her career high.

But seeing Williams impose her will upon her gave Svitolina a good look at the level it will take to become a Grand Slam champion.

"I think, generally, I have to improve my level, when I'm not playing unbelievable, because every day you cannot play unbelievable," Svitolina said.

"My middle level, where I have to just improve everything from the baseline, my shots, my decisions as well, my serve - that's what we're going to try and do."

"It also comes from experience. You have to see where you are with your level. These kind of matches definitely show you

big-time." Svitolina tested Williams early, but failed to convert three break points in the opening game and three more in the fifth.

"You are playing in front of the best tennis player in the world," Svitolina said. "If you don't take it, she just grabs it and there's no chance to take it back."

Svitolina is nursing a knee strain as she prepares to leave for China to continue her campaign, if her health allows.

"I have a flight on Saturday to go to Zhengzhou. I'm going to play my match on Tuesday or Wednesday. I have no time for preparation," she said.

"I'm going to recover and see how it goes because been little bit having some issues with my knee, which again I don't want to go back into what was in the summer, which is tough."

"I will see how it goes, my health. I'm now going to play few tournaments in China. They're very important."



Elina Svitolina of the Ukraine returns a shot during her US Open semi-final against Serena Williams of the United States at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in the Queens borough of New York City. (Getty Images/AFP)

BASKETBALL WORLD CUP

Spain squeeze into quarters with no-frills Italy win

'It says a lot about our togetherness, toughness, commitment'



Spain's Juan Hernangomez (right), Italy's Alessandro Gentile and Paul Biligha fight for the ball during their Basketball World Cup Group J second round game in Wuhan yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
Wuhan, China

Title-contenders Spain produced a devastating late burst to seal a 67-60 victory over Italy and squeeze into the Basketball World Cup quarter-finals yesterday - and take strongly fancied Serbia with them.

Also into the last eight in China are surprise package Poland and Argentina after they overcame Russia and Venezuela respectively. Juan Hernangomez of the Denver Nuggets led the scoring for Spain with 16 points, but they will have to play better offensively if they are to go

much farther in the competition. Italy's 60 points was their lowest-scoring game since 1998, according to governing body FIBA, and Spain coach Sergio Scariolo said: "Everyone should give credit to what our players did defensively."

"It says a lot about our togetherness, toughness, commitment."

"It was not our best offensive game, but I give a lot of value to what my players did defensively."

Scariolo admitted that the Rio 2016 Olympic bronze medallists started sloppily in Wuhan, in what was an occasionally testy second-round affair against their European rivals. The teams were level 18-18 after the first quarter, only for the Italians to

edge ahead by a single point at half-time.

Spain, ranked second in the world behind world and Olympic champions the United States, were a different proposition for most of the third quarter, but saw their initial decent advantage narrowed to just two points going into the fourth.

Italy, ranked 13th, were the underdogs but they refused to lie down and tied the game at 50-50 with a lay-up by Marco Belinelli of NBA team San Antonio Spurs.

The Italians streaked into a four-point lead with four minutes left, as the pressure cranked up another notch. But Spain and Ricky Rubio were not done, the Phoenix Suns guard getting the

freedom of the court to edge ahead by two points once more.

The 28-year-old was increasingly influential when he was needed most. He made two unerring free throws for a precious 60-56 lead, part of a game-winning 10-0 run for the Spaniards in the closing stages.

BRILLIANT SERBIA

Denver Nuggets All-Star Nikola Jokic pulled the strings as formidable Serbia demolished Puerto Rico 90-47 to stand on the brink of the last eight.

Spain's low-scoring victory later in the day was enough to send the impressive Serbs through but the two countries will still play on Sunday in a

mouthwatering match-up for supremacy of the group. Spain coach Scariolo pointedly refused to answer any questions about the match with Serbia.

Jokic had 14 points and 10 rebounds, and made a sublime laser pass to cut open the Puerto Rico defence, as Serbia began the second-round group phase much as they finished the first.

Sacramento Kings forward Nemanja Bjelica also impressed once more, drilling a leading 18 points. World and Olympic silver medallists Serbia are in devastating form, comfortably winning all four matches in China and claiming the unofficial title of favourites from holders the United States.

PREVIEW

All Blacks target Tonga defence in World Cup warm-up

AFP
Wellington

The All Blacks play their final World Cup warm-up against Tonga today with coach Steve Hansen looking for a defence-busting performance from the reigning champions.

Hansen is expecting opponents in Japan to employ rush defence in a bid to smother the All Blacks' attack and derail the New Zealanders' campaign for a third straight World Cup, and fourth overall.

A hit-out against the bruising Tongans in Hamilton will give the All Blacks a chance to test their attacking mettle before the tournament.

"There's definitely been a swing or bias towards defence... but someone's going to crack that nut because history tells us that will happen," Hansen said this week. "When it does, it will open up the floodgates for the attacking game to come strong again."

Hansen, who coached New Zealand to victory in 2015 and was an assistant for the team's 2011 triumph, backed his players to succeed on attack, pointing to last month's 36-0 demolition of Australia.

However, the scope to experiment against Tonga is limited, as the All Blacks cannot afford a slow start in Japan, where they face South Africa in

a blockbuster opening match on September 21. The loser potentially faces Ireland in the quarter-finals, so Hansen wants his players to emerge from the Tonga fixture with confidence and momentum.

Hansen singled out fullback Ben Smith as a player who could benefit from a strong performance in Hamilton after struggling for form recently.

He said the 33-year-old, who is heading to French club Pau after the World Cup, needed to play his natural game.

"He's lost is his own self-belief and his confidence. Maybe that's because of injury, maybe it's because everyone's talking about him leaving and he's got caught up in that," he said.

"I want to see Bender (Smith) just being Bender. Trust his instincts, don't over-think things, just get out there and play with a big smile on his face."

Tonga, ranked 15th in the world, enter the match as underdogs after failing to beat New Zealand in five previous attempts. "It's a massive challenge but I still believe we're a chance of playing well and getting close," coach Toutai Kefu said.

"The All Blacks are the number one team in the world, we're under no illusions about that, but we've still got a chance regardless of how small that is."

Pocock confirms World Cup will be his Wallabies swansong

Australia forward David Pocock confirmed yesterday that he would play no more test rugby after taking part in his third Rugby World Cup for the Wallabies in Japan.

The 31-year-old flanker, who will captain Australia in their final World Cup warm-up against Samoa in Sydney today, had already made it clear in May he would not be seeking a new contract with Rugby Australia.

As befits a player who does his best work in the dark corners of the ruck, Pocock made the announcement by stealth, telling a news conference it was going to be good "finishing up" with scrumhalf Will Genia.

He later made it clearer when asked about playing his last Test on home soil.

"I guess on a personal note, it adds a bit," he said. "You reflect on the time you've had in the Wallabies jersey, what you've tried to add, the legacy you hope you'll leave and then just the opportunity to play in front of family and friends one last time."

"We know that without a good team performance, it won't be

as special." A veteran of 77 tests since 2008, Pocock has played almost no rugby this year because of a calf problem and Saturday's match at Western Sydney Stadium will be his first action since March 8.

It is measure of his quality that he was nevertheless selected in Michael Cheika's World Cup squad and handed the captaincy in place of the rested Michael Hooper for today's test.

Pocock has long been regarded as one of the best poachers of the ball at the breakdown in the world game and all but single-handedly hauled Australia past South Africa in the quarter-finals of the 2011 World Cup.

He linked up with Hooper in a twin-openside back row formation at the 2015 World Cup, where the Wallabies reached the final for the third time but lost to New Zealand.

Genia, prop Sekope Kepu, and hooker Tafa Tu'afu Polota-Nau are the other Wallabies stalwarts who have confirmed they will be retiring from internationals after the World Cup.

RUGBY

Boks batter Japan to slay demons in WC warm-up

AFP
Kumagaya, Japan

Makazole Mapiimpi grabbed a hat-trick as South Africa smashed World Cup hosts Japan 41-7 yesterday, avenging the most humiliating loss in Springbok history two weeks before the serious business begins.

The last time the teams met, hitherto tournament no-hopers Japan stunned the Boks 34-32 on the English south coast in their opening game of the 2015 World Cup - an upset of such epic proportions it spawned a recent movie.

But two-time world champions South Africa, who face New Zealand in a titanic Pool B opener on September 21, overpowered the Brave Blossoms this time out to win a one-sided World Cup warm-up played in brutal humidity in Kumagaya, north of Tokyo.

"We did what we wanted to do, especially in the first half," said South Africa captain Siya Kolisi after returning to skipper the side following a lengthy knee injury.

"Japan got better and better as the game went on but we just stuck to our guns."

South Africa took just seven minutes to open the scoring after

a bulldozing scrum, Cheslin Kolbe diving into the corner before fellow winger Mapiimpi ran in two more tries as South Africa went into halftime leading 22-0.

Cajoled by the talismanic Kolisi, the Springboks continued to produce monster hits and dominate the set-piece, extending their advantage when Mapiimpi burst clear to complete his hat-trick on 52 minutes.

Kotaro Matsushima pulled a try back on the hour mark, but with Francois Louw yellow-carded and South Africa appearing to wilt in the heat, the visitors conjured up two late tries to give the scoreline a slightly flattering hue.

Kolbe intercepted an errant Yu Tamura pass to sprint 70 metres for his second of the evening before Herschel Jantjies got in on the action to add a sixth try for South Africa just before the buzzer.

'POSITIVE ENERGY'

"In the last couple of minutes we fought hard with a man down to score two tries," said Kolisi, the only change to a Springboks side who drew 16-16 with the All Blacks in Wellington six weeks ago en route to winning Rugby Championship.

"Japan came back with that try and that gave them motivation,"

added the South Africa captain, one of a handful of Boks players involved in the World Cup who suffered that shock defeat in Brighton four years ago.

"The crowd really got behind them and they got more ball in hand. They're going to be great going forward."

Japan were left with plenty to ponder before they kick off the World Cup against Russia in Tokyo on September 20.

"It wasn't the result we wanted," admitted Japan captain Michael Leitch, one of the heroes of that astonishing victory in 2015.

"But there's lots of valuable lessons we can learn and we'll look to turn that loss into positive energy before the World Cup."

Japan coach Jamie Joseph echoed his captain, calling it "great preparation for us, exactly what we needed going into the World Cup."

But Tamura could barely conceal his annoyance.

"We got caught playing their tempo," growled the flyhalf. "We need to improve quickly before we play Russia."

An easy win ticked all the boxes for South Africa, whose coach Rassie Erasmus purred: "This puts us on the right track before we play the All Blacks."



South Africa's Makazole Mapiimpi runs to score a try during the friendly match against Japan at the Kumagaya Rugby Stadium in Kumagaya, Japan, yesterday. (AFP)

PREVIEW

Bengals geared up for Seahawks fans to bring the noise

AFP
New York

If the Cincinnati Bengals could get a do-over on their schedule and pick another place to open their season, they'd likely take it.

With a new coach and offensive system, star receiver A.J. Green out with an ankle injury and an unsettled offensive line, heading into Seattle's CenturyLink Field - one of the loudest stadiums in the NFL - isn't the ideal way to start. Plus, Bengals left tackle Cordy Glenn has been placed in the concussion protocol, putting his status for tomorrow's game against the Seahawks in doubt.

Not exactly the debut first-year head coach Zac Taylor, who is familiar with the setting in Seattle after having been an assistant the past two seasons with the NFC West rival Los Angeles Rams, was looking for.

"I've seen the worst of it," Taylor said. "Seattle is one of the top places on the road that I've ever been part of. We really worked on it spring-time on our non-verbal communication. That's one of the things that we stress in everyday life - communication, verbal and non-verbal. It's a

great test. We feel like we have an answer."

Bengals quarterback Andy Dalton echoed Taylor's comments. "When you play in the noise, you've got to have great communication," Dalton said. "You've got to make sure everybody's on the same page. Everybody's dialed in. Everybody's listening."

"We'll be prepared for it. We know it's going to be loud - first game of the year. Seattle's a loud place anyway. We can't have the mistakes. We can't be jumping offsides. We can't do the stuff that will set you back. We've got to prepare for it and mentally be ready for it."

The Bengals have pumped in loud music during practice to prepare for the Seahawks. "It's better than not having it," Dalton said. "But it's not the same as Sunday."

Throw in the Seahawks' acquisition of three-time Pro Bowl defensive end Jadeveon Clowney, and things could really get tough for the Bengals, who lost nine of their last 11 games last season to finish 6-10.

The Seahawks finished 10-6 and made the playoffs last season in what was supposed to be a rebuilding year. They acquired Clowney last weekend in a trade with Houston for two linebackers and a third-round draft pick next year.

"I'm glad it's over, the whole process of being traded and everything," Clowney said. "I'm glad I can be a part of this team here now and get going on a new journey."

Clowney went through his first practice in Seattle on Monday. "His excitement about coming here and being part of this team and ready to take advantage of this opportunity to show where he belongs. He's not going to let this go by now," Seattle coach Pete Carroll said.

"He wants to show us that we've got to have him here. That's thrilling for us to hear. We'll see what goes down in the long haul."

Clowney will play on one end of the Seahawks' defensive line, with Ziggy Ansah on the other. Ansah, another former Pro Bowl player, signed as a free agent with Seattle in the offseason.

"Those guys are like bookends. They're exactly what you're looking for on the edge," Carroll said. "I'm hoping we'll be able to see these guys come together and be a factor and play off one another and complement each other."

Second-round rookie DK Metcalf is on track to play for Seattle after a speedy recovery from a preseason knee scope, but it's unclear how many reps he'll get.



Cincinnati Bengals star receiver AJ Green.

NFL

Rodgers and Packers beat Bears in opener

'I had a couple of real bad throws. We were out of synch at times. But we've got a defense'



Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers (right) is sacked by Chicago Bears defensive end Roy Robertson-Harris in the first quarter at Soldier Field. PICTURE: USA TODAY

AFP
Los Angeles

The Green Bay Packers defense stepped up to give rookie head coach Matt LaFleur a winning debut with a 10-3 victory over the Chicago Bears Thursday in the first game of the NFL's centenary season.

Veteran quarterback Aaron Rodgers, playing his first game under LaFleur, connected on 18 of 30 passes for 203 yards and one touchdown. But it was the Packers defense that starred - thwarting the Bears at Soldier Field in Chicago in a meeting of fierce NFC North division rivals.

Green Bay safety Adrian Amos - a former Bear - ended Chicago's hopes of a game-tying drive when he intercepted Bears quarterback Mitch Trubisky's pass to the end zone to preserve the 10-3 lead with 1:58 remaining.

"We've got a defense," Rodgers said. "I had a couple of real bad throws. We were out of synch at times," Rodgers said. "But we've got a defense."

After Green Bay's offense totalled minus-12 yards in the first quarter, Rodgers came to life early in the second.

He piloted a 74-yard, four-play drive capped by an eight-yard touchdown pass to tight end Jimmy Graham.

Rodgers had pass completions on all four plays - sparking the drive with a 47-yarder to wide receiver Marquez Valdes-Scantling. That gave the Packers a 7-3 lead over the Bears, who had taken

Bears, Nagy search for remedy after 'ridiculous' opener

On the optimistic side, Matt Nagy has 10 days to evaluate and implement a fix for an ailing offense after the Chicago Bears put up three points in what the second-year head coach termed a "ridiculous" showing Thursday against the Green Bay Packers. The Packers won the opener 10-3 at Soldier Field.

"It just seemed a little scattered tonight with all our personnel (groups) and just trying to find a rhythm and trying to find our identity on offense, and we just put ourselves in bad situations and shot ourselves in the foot," quarterback Mitchell Trubisky said after throwing a game-sealing interception in the end zone with 2:03 remaining. "It's just

we were uncharacteristic of usually who we were tonight as an offense, and I think we just need to do our job. But we just couldn't find a rhythm, and I don't think it's because we didn't play in the preseason, because we were rolling in practice, and it just didn't translate the week of practice we had to the game. We're going to look at the film and try to find out why and make sure it doesn't happen again."

Packers defensive coordinator Mike Pettine helped spare the Matt LaFleur in his coaching debut. The Bears went 3 for 15 on third downs. The Packers put up negative yardage in the first quarter and survived with a win despite consistently moving the chains on

only one drive, which ended in Aaron Rodgers finding tight end Jimmy Graham in the end zone. Chicago dialed up only 12 handoffs in the game, while Trubisky threw 45 passes and never found the strike zone. Rookie David Montgomery, a star of the preseason for the Bears, managed six carries and one reception.

"That part is new to us a little bit, so we've got to make sure that, again, we figure out how to get that thing right," Nagy said. "And luckily it is the first game of the year." Nagy will be knuckles deep in his game plan for the Denver Broncos and former Bears defensive co-ordinator Vic Fangio by the time the rest of the Week 1 slate gets underway

tomorrow. Fangio knows all the flaws and personalities inside the building, and he likely already has a decent jump on his plan to keep the Bears' offense in hibernation next week in Denver. Nagy might take a day or two to get over putting up a 3-spot in the primetime 2019 opener. "There's humility there just for the fact that I know that our guys - we feel really good, we felt good going into it," Nagy said. "I don't know what the exact word is for it other than that what you can't do and what you can't fall into the trap of is all of a sudden making this seem like it was the Super Bowl and we just lost the Super Bowl. We didn't lose the Super Bowl, we lost the first game of the regular season."

the lead on a 38-yard field goal from Eddy Pineiro. On a night when points were at a premium, the Packers pushed their lead to 10-3 with a 39-yard field goal by Mason Crosby with just over five minutes remaining.

LaFleur became the first NFL coach to challenge a pass interference non-call in a regular-season game under new video review rules allowing such calls to be chal-

lenged. The embarrassing missed call in last season's NFC championship game - which likely kept the New Orleans Saints out of the Super Bowl - prompted the change. But LaFleur's historic challenge came to nothing as the call on the field stood. But soon back-to-back penalties by the Bears offensive line and an offensive pass interference call on Chicago's Taylor Gabriel left the Bears facing first-down

and 40 yards and, eventually, a punt on the possession. "I'm really happy for Matt - his first win as a head coach," Rodgers, a two-time NFL Most Valuable Player and a Super Bowl champion, said.

The 39-year-old LaFleur was hired to try to get the Packers back on track after two straight seasons without reaching the playoffs - which led to Mike McCarthy's exit.

MLB

Hudson drives in two, wins 15th as Cards top Giants

Reuters
New York

Dakota Hudson won his fifth consecutive start and drove home two runs as the St. Louis Cardinals beat the visiting San Francisco Giants 10-0 Thursday afternoon.

The Cardinals won their fifth consecutive series to extend a second-half surge. They have won six of their past eight games and 12 of their past 15.

Since falling below .500 at 44-45 on July 12, the Cardinals have gone 35-16 to climb into the National League Central lead.

The fading Giants lost for the eighth time in their past 10 games. Hudson (15-6) held the Giants scoreless on one hit through six innings. He's 9-2 with one no-decision in his past 12 starts.

Genesis Cabrera pitched the final three innings for the Cardinals to earn his first career save.

Hudson helped his own cause with a two-run single in the third inning as the Cardinals scored five times to blow open the game. Those were the first RBIs of his big-league career.

Paul DeJong hit a two-run homer, his 26th of the season - the most ever by a Cardinals shortstop - in the first inning to open a 3-0 lead. Rangel Ravelo hit his first career homer, a two-run shot in the eighth inning.

RESULTS		
Cardinals	10-0	Giants
Astros	11-9	Mariners
Braves	4-2	Nationals
Reds	4-3	Phillies
Rays	6-4	Blue Jays
Cubs	10-5	Brewers
White Sox	7-1	Indians
Twins	2-1	Red Sox
Marlins	10-7	Pirates
Athletics	10-6	Angels
Tigers	6-4	Royals
Rangers	3-1	Orioles

Paul Goldschmidt and Matt Carpenter each added two hits and an RBI for the Cards. Yadier Molina extended his hitting streak to 12 games with an RBI single. That was Molina's 1,944th hit as a Cardinal, tying Ozzie Smith for seventh place on the franchise's all-time list. Molina's appearance at catcher tied him with Jim Sundberg (1,927 games) for

the ninth-most in major league history.

Giants starting pitcher Logan Webb (1-1) allowed eight runs (seven earned) on eight hits and two walks in 2 2/3 innings.

After that, both managers substituted freely. The Giants used 20 players with their expanded September roster and the Cardinals used 15 players. On the injury front, X-rays were negative on the bruised wrist suffered by Giants reliever Tony Watson on Wednesday night.

BRANTLEY'S HOMER CAPS ASTROS' 13-INNING WIN OVER MARINERS

Michael Brantley socked a two-run homer with one out in the 13th inning as the host Houston Astros erased a seven-run deficit in their walk-off 11-9 victory over the Seattle Mariners on Thursday night. Brantley, who drove in Jose Altuve for the game-tying run with a sacrifice fly in the eighth inning, brought home Jake Marisnick with his blast to right-center field off Matt Wisler (3-4). Josh James (5-0) earned the win for the Astros, who improved to 13-1 against the Mariners this season.

Each team scored in the 12th inning. Mariners third baseman Kyle Seager socked his second homer of the game with one out off James, his 21st home run of the season, going the opposite way to left field and providing Seattle a 9-8 lead.

But with two outs and facing a 1-2 count in the bottom of the 12th, the Astros' Kyle Tucker dumped an RBI single into right field, scoring pinch runner Myles Straw to tie the game.

Austin Nola, the third of six consecutive batters to reach safely in the first inning off Astros left-hander Wade Miley, doubled in two runs. Miley left the game before recording an out.



St. Louis Cardinals starting pitcher Dakota Hudson hits a two run RBI against the San Francisco Giants during the third inning at Busch Stadium. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

CHANGE OF PLANS

Semenya joins South African football club

Agencies
Johannesburg

Star South African athlete **Caster Semenya**, who cannot defend her world 800-metre title this month because she refuses to take testosterone-reducing drugs, is set to become a footballer.

The two-time Olympic gold medalist is training with the Johannesburg-based JWJ club, but cannot play until next year because the registration deadline for this season has closed.

"I am looking forward to this new journey – I appreciate the love and support I already get from the team," Semenya said on the club website.

National women's team captain Janine van Wyk, after whom the club is named, told AFP she

was "thrilled Caster had chosen to join her team".

Semenya is following in the footsteps of Jamaican superstar sprinter Usain Bolt, who trained with Australian club Central Coast Mariners after retiring but did not secure a contract.

International athletics body the IAAF ruled this year that females like Semenya who have differences of sexual development have a competitive advantage.

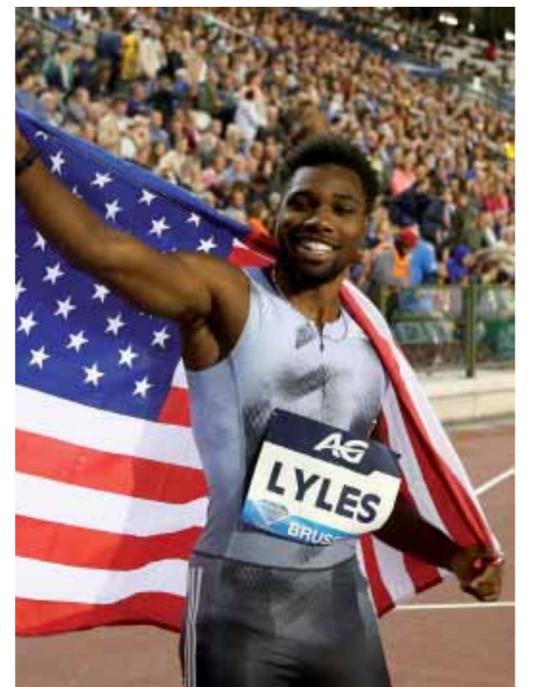
It barred such athletes from competing in races between 400m and the mile unless they took testosterone-reducing medication.

Semenya refused and won a legal battle, enabling her to compete in 800m races, before a Swiss court overruled the decision, forcing her to miss the upcoming world championships in Qatar.



ATHLETICS

Lyles fires warning shot with double Diamond win

AFP
Brussels, Belgium

US sprinter **Noah Lyles** underlined his medal credentials ahead of the world championships by bagging a second Diamond League trophy after scorching to victory in 19.74 seconds in the 200 metres in the Brussels final yesterday.

The 22-year-old went to last week's first final in Zurich and pipped American teammate and current world champion Justin Gatlin to win the 100m.

Lyles, however, will only race the 200m at the September 27-October 6 world championships in Doha.

The American went into the 200m in the Belgian capital as hot favourite, having clocked 19.50sec in Lausanne last month, a time that made him the fourth fastest of all time over the half-lap race, followed up by a meeting record of 19.65 in Paris.

The track at Brussels' King Baudouin stadium is a rapid one, and Lyles opted for the relatively

wide lane seven, outside Canadian Andre de Grasse and inside Trinidad and Tobago's Jereme Richards.

He made no mistake, hitting the bend ahead of Richards and opening up down the home stretch, only to find world and European champion Ramil Guliyev of Turkey pushing him all the way to the line.

Guliyev came in second in 19.86sec, just one-hundredth ahead of De Grasse.

"It started raining there, but you've got to be a pro and run in all conditions," said Lyles.

His time of 19.74sec was a way off the meet record of 19.26sec set in 2011 by Jamaican Yohan Blake.

Blake's time remains the second fastest time ever run over the 200m after Usain Bolt's world record of 19.19sec set in the 2009 Berlin world championships.

American Walter Dix ran 19.53sec behind Blake in 2011 and Bolt himself has clocked a 19.57sec at the stadium, where there have been an impressive 26 sub-20sec performances in the 200m.

FORMULA 1

Leclerc sets the pace in practice for Ferrari's home race

Hamilton, 65 points clear of teammate Valtteri Bottas, was 0.068 slower in second

Reuters
Monza, Italy

Charles Leclerc set the pace in practice for his Ferrari team's home Italian Grand Prix yesterday with Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton hot on his heels for Mercedes.

The 21-year-old Monegasque led both sessions at Monza, the soggy and crash-strewn first one hardly representative after heavy overnight downpours while showers returned in the afternoon.

Fresh from his first F1 victory last weekend at a Belgian Grand Prix overshadowed by the death of French Formula Two racer Anthoine Hubert, Leclerc lapped the 'Pista Magica' with a best time of one minute 20.978 seconds.

The youngster had led the first session timesheets with a time of 1:27.905 and is hitting a fine run of form after also dominating practice at Spa-Francorchamps and taking pole position.

Ferrari and Monza are both celebrating 90th anniversaries this weekend, with a big crowd already yesterday and the grandstands festooned with red and white banners.

Ferrari have not won at Monza since Spaniard Fernando Alonso in 2010 but hopes of ending that drought are high at a circuit that suits their car's characteristics, although rain is expected.

Hamilton, 65 points clear of teammate Valtteri Bottas with eight races remaining, ended the day 0.068 slower but benefiting from an aerodynamic tow to split the Ferrari drivers.



Ferrari's Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc leaves the pits during the first practice session in Monza, Italy, yesterday. (AFP)

Sebastian Vettel was third fastest in 1:21.179.

The morning featured three red flags and saw McLaren's Carlos Sainz and Lando Norris second and third on the timesheets, positions the once-dominant team can only dream of in races at the moment.

Hamilton, last year's race winner to boos from the unhappy crowd, was fourth in the morning

with Vettel only eighth quickest and 2.6 seconds off the pace.

Alfa Romeo's former Ferrari driver Kimi Raikkonen and Racing Point's Sergio Perez both crashed in the treacherous conditions while others spun, including Bottas who ended the first session ninth fastest but was fourth after lunch.

Raikkonen was first off at Parabolica with half an hour com-

pleted, while Perez hit the wall heavily at the Ascari chicane.

Toro Rosso's Pierre Gasly caused the final red flag when his car hit a kerb at the first chicane and briefly caused an obstruction, before being shoved clear by marshals.

British-born Thai racer Alexander Albon, who has traded places with Gasly, was fifth and sixth fastest for Red Bull in the

respective sessions.

Team mate Max Verstappen, who will drop to the back end of the starting grid due to engine changes along with Gasly and Norris, was fifth in the second session.

Neither McLaren featured in the afternoon top 10, with Norris sidelined for all but the last 20 minutes due to an oil leak that took time to fix.

BOTTOMLINE

Ricciardo backs Hamilton over fans cheering crash

AFP
Monza, Italy

Daniel Ricciardo has appealed for "more adult" behaviour and understanding from Formula One fans following an outbreak of cheers when Lewis Hamilton crashed in practice at last weekend's Belgian Grand Prix.

Speaking at Monza, ahead of this weekend's Italian Grand Prix, the Renault driver said he supported Hamilton's comments made after his accident in third practice last Saturday morning, just hours before the death of French driver Anthoine Hubert in a Formula Two race.

The defending five-time

world champion skidded off-circuit and into the barriers at Spa-Francorchamps where massed groups of rival teams' fans – many of them supporting Max Verstappen – revelled in his misfortune.

Hamilton was unhurt. In an Instagram post, the Briton said: "If a single one of you watching and enjoying this sport think for a second what we do is safe your hugely mistaken."

"All these drivers put their life on the line when they hit the track and people need to appreciate that in a serious way because it is not appreciated enough."

Ricciardo, who admitted he was unsure he felt motivated to race on Sunday following Hubert's death, said he agreed with Hamilton and suggested it was



childish to cheer when a driver crashed.

"Whether you like someone or not, it is not nice to cheer for someone's downfall or mistake," said the Australian. "He (Hamilton) thinks the crowd assume the crash happens and we are ok, or whatever, and it is not like that."

"Every time we go on track, there is a risk and every time we do hit a wall, whether we are ok or not, it still plays something on your mind when you crash."

"Every time you go back to that corner, maybe there is something psychological there. So it does have an impact, one way or the other, physically or mentally, and I guess that is where he was com-

ing from with that.

"I do agree with him, but it is also so hard because the fans, unless you race and put yourself in that position, they never experience what we do."

"It is just the nature of being a fan of a sport you don't compete in. It is hard to grasp or understand."

"All we can ask for is that if you are a fan, then be a true fan and respect what we do – not only the skill, but also the risk. That is probably all we can ask."

He added that it was understandable that fans had favourites and there was some rivalry.

"You don't have to like every driver," he went on. "But to behave like that – you would expect if from kids, not adults. You would hope they behave better."

SPOTLIGHT

Farah has 'no regrets' about missing world championships

AFP
London, United Kingdom

Mo Farah says he has "no regrets" over his decision to skip the world championships as he seeks to retain his Chicago Marathon crown.

With his glittering track career now apparently over, Farah is aiming to establish himself among the world's elite marathon runners.

"I don't have any regrets (about missing the world championships), the 36-year-old told Britain's Press Association news agency. "It's too close to Chicago (on October 13) and if I want to get ready for the 2020 Olympics, I have to do more marathons."

"It is better to do one where I can feel strong and make sure I'm up there among the best in the world."

Farah claimed his first marathon title 12 months ago when he stormed clear of Ethiopia's Mosinet Geremew to win in Chicago in a time of two hours, five minutes and 11 seconds – a European record.

"I think it is going to be a different race in Chicago this year because after winning it last year I am going into it with a target on



my back," the British runner said.

"I'm still learning, but I like to have that pressure. Pressure is always something you put on yourself, but for me it gives me the confidence of knowing I've done it once, so I can do it again."

Farah is targeting a sixth successive Great North Run title tomorrow in the northeast of England.

"This is a really important race for me before Chicago because it gives me the opportunity to assess my performance and get back to basics," he said.

"A lot has changed since I won my first Great North Run in 2014. I have been getting stronger every year and I have every intention of crossing that bridge leading the pack once again."

FOCUS

ANOC launches new World Beach Games website

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC) launched the new ANOC World Beach Games website which will serve as the central hub of all news, information and results for the inaugural multi-sport event in Doha.

The user-friendly website (www.awbgqatar.com) is hosted within the ANOC website and includes information on the Games venues, participating countries, the provisional competition schedule and the latest news and photo galleries. The website will be continually updated with more detailed information and news over the coming days and weeks in the build up to the multi-sport event.

During the Games, fans wanting to watch the competitions live will be able to do so through the website's live stream and will be able to find all competition results on the new digital platform.

New Instagram (@awbg2019) and Twitter (@AWBG2019) accounts have also been created to maximise connectivity with athletes, fans, NOCs and International Federations.

ANOC Secretary Gunilla Lindberg said: "We are delighted to launch the ANOC World Beach Games website which will be the go-to resource for NOCs, athletes, fans and everyone who wants to learn more about the Games and be kept informed on the latest results and updates.

"As we aim to ensure the website is as comprehensive and informative as possible, we will be

constantly updating it with new information. Our social media platforms will allow us to interact directly with our NOCs, their athletes and beach sports fans around the world.

"With just over a month to go until the first-ever ANOC World Beach Games there is a huge amount to look forward to and our digital platforms will be keeping everyone updated every step of the way."

CRICKET

Australia hail Smith as Don incarnate

Smith's 3 double tons vs England is second only to Bradman's 5

Reuters
Melbourne, Australia

The Steve Smith double century at Old Trafford that continued his brilliant Ashes campaign has generated wonder Down Under, with Australian media branding him a modern-day Don Bradman yesterday.

The Depression-era Bradman's batting average of 99.94 invites no comparison but Smith's feats in England mark him out as the next most effective tormentor of the nation's bowlers.

Back at the crease after missing the third test through concussion, his 211 propelled him to 589 runs for the series at an average of 147.25, leaving England's Headingley saviour Ben Stokes (327 at 81.75) well behind in second place.

Smith's three double centuries against England is second only to Bradman's record five, while his 11th Ashes ton moved him past Steve Waugh's 10 into outright third overall.

Only Bradman (19) and England's Jack Hobbs (12) have more Ashes hundreds.

"Books detail Bradman's greatness, sepia toned newsreels of his deeds fill a museum that bears his name," Russell Gould wrote glowingly in Melbourne's *Herald Sun* newspaper.

"There was even a song written about him.

"Our Steve Smith' is more likely to be a trending hashtag.

"But however it's captured, this era, this display of sheer cricketing dominance will live well beyond this time, and this team."

Smith has now five centuries



Australia's Steve Smith acknowledges the crowd after reaching 200 runs on the second day of the fourth Test at Old Trafford in Manchester, United Kingdom, on Thursday. (Reuters)

from his last six tests against England and averages 65.37 in the Ashes, also second only to Bradman among Australian cricketers.

His day two exploits pushed Australia to a mammoth 497 for eight declared, with England 23 for one at the close of day two on Thursday, and under huge pressure to keep the series alive.

Bradman's lofty record of 5,028 Ashes runs has remained the benchmark for 70 years and 30-year-old Smith (2,615) may struggle to mow it down, even if his formidable gifts and hunger remain undimmed for years.

But the former captain is well on the way to being regarded as one of the all-time greats, according to former Australia players.

"He could be anything. We might be seeing history in the making here," former test batsman Mike Hussey said on ESPNcricinfo.

"We think no-one can beat Bradman. I don't think he's going to even beat Bradman. But he maybe is pushing the bar higher and higher."

Former Australia captain Ricky Ponting described Smith as a "genius" and seemingly impervious to any bowler's plans.

"To think how good Bradman must have been - to be a third again better than what Steve Smith's doing at the moment - is ridiculous," Ponting told Cricket Australia's website (cricket.com.au).

"(Smith's) got four, five, six years of good cricket ahead of him, which if you add it up, that's probably another 80, 90 test matches.

"Then he's played 150 games and could have all sorts of numbers and records by then and let's hope he does, because the way he's going about it now, the way he's playing, he deserves to get the rewards from that."

Need to solve middle-order crisis in ODIs: India batting coach Rathour

IAN S
New Delhi

Newly-appointed Team India batting coach Vikram Rathour has acknowledged that the middle-order has not been able to perform in limited-overs cricket and that's something which he will look to sort out in the coming days.

Rathour, who played six Tests and seven ODIs for India in the 90s and was also a selector, was picked as India's new batting coach after Sanjay Bangar was removed following India's World Cup semi-final exit in which, many feel, he was blamed for not being able to find a suitable batsman for the vital No 4 spot.

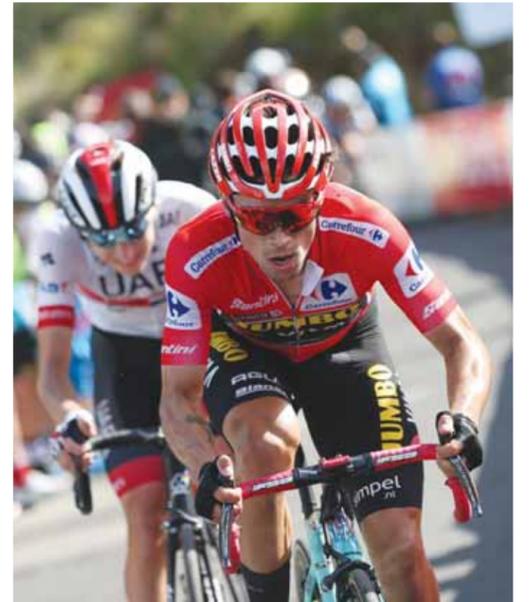
"It is not just about the World Cup. It is one slot (we must look at). The middle-order in one-day is not doing well and we must, of course, sort it out," Rathour said about the much-debated No 4 slot while speaking to bcciv.

"Shreyas Iyer has done well in the last couple of games and we also have Manish Pandey. These two guys have done very well in domestic cricket and with India A. These are the batters who are capable of doing the job and I have no doubt about it in my mind."

Iyer batted at number five during the recently-concluded ODI series in the West Indies and scored 71 and 65 in the two innings he played and impressed both head coach Ravi Shastri and skipper Virat Kohli. "It is a matter of getting it right at the top level. We need to back them and provide them with the right preparations so that they can be there for a longer time. They have enough talent in them to do well," said Rathour.

CYCLING

Roglic tightens grip on Vuelta lead as Pogacar wins stage 13



Slovenia's Primož Roglič (right) rides ahead of compatriot Tadej Pogacar as they approach the finish line of the 13th stage of the 2019 La Vuelta in Los Machucos, Spain, yesterday. (AFP)

Reuters
Los Machucos, Spain

Slovenian Primož Roglič struck another blow in his bid to win the Vuelta a Espana by extending his overall lead by 33 seconds after finishing second on yesterday's stage 13 on the tail of winner Tadej Pogacar.

Roglič now leads Spaniard Alejandro Valverde by two minutes 25 seconds, while Slovenian Pogacar climbed into third place overall thanks to his stage win, trailing Roglič by three minutes and one second.

Roglič had taken a commanding lead by winning Tuesday's time trial but had taken it easy in the last two hilly rides along with his fellow general classification contenders.

Yet he took centre stage when the race returned to the mountains in picturesque northern Spain for the 166.4 kilometre ride from Bilbao to Los Machucos. Monumento Vaca Pasiega, producing a stunning late double-pronged attack with Pogacar.

Twice winner Chris Froome

once compared the stage's summit finish to "riding up a wall" and it was on the final ascent of the stage where the drama began.

Spaniard Hector Saez was leading by over two minutes before reaching the foot of Los Machucos but he was soon overtaken by Bruno Armirail as the climb kicked in, with the peloton closing in behind.

The 2016 winner, Nairo Quintana, launched a short-lived attack but was soon reeled in, while Roglič and Pogacar finally broke free with two kilometres to go.

The Slovenian duo then set their sights on the then leader Pierre Latour, soon overtaking the Frenchman with little more than a kilometre to go.

Twenty-year-old Pogacar dug deeper and took his second stage victory of this Vuelta, his Grand Tour debut, while Roglič came in right behind in his slipstream, with Frenchman Latour finishing third, 27 seconds back.

Valverde and Quintana were fourth and fifth respectively, also 27 seconds down, while Miguel Angel Lopez finished one minute and one second behind Pogacar and Roglič, dropping to fourth overall.

SPOTLIGHT

Ruiz Jr 'best fighter', says Joshua ahead of re-match

AFP
London, United Kingdom

Anthony Joshua believes he will be up against the best fighter on the planet when he takes on Andy Ruiz Jr in his December rematch with the heavyweight world champion.

Ruiz, who was born in the United States but fights for Mexico, caused a major shock in June when he handed out a first defeat for Joshua to win the WBA, IBF and WBO crowns in New York.

In the third part of a trilogy of press conferences to promote the rematch, Britain's Joshua told reporters in London: "My fights are the elite of the elite and are top of the crop. That little bit of motivation of fighting someone who has the skill-set and is the champion.

"It's not like I'm fighting someone as a stepping stone to a champion. We can't overlook Andy and his talent and his success in the ring as I'm fighting the best out there right now. In my opinion Andy Ruiz is the best heavyweight out there."

Former Olympic champion Joshua was knocked down four



Mexican-US WBA, IBF, WBO and IBO heavyweight boxing champion Andy Ruiz Jr (left) and Britain's Anthony Joshua pose at a promotional press conference in London yesterday. (AFP)

times by Ruiz before he was stopped in the seventh round on his US debut, marking one of the biggest upsets in heavyweight history.

He spoke about his desire to return to the top of the sport,

adding: "Once I've got my purpose of life organised, I can do anything and that motivation will be the same.

"Put me on the street to clean graffiti off the wall, I want to make sure my graffiti cleaning

is better than yours - and that's just my purpose in life.

"So motivation isn't just about boxing.

"I've got to make a few changes in my lifestyle now to correct and align them again so I align

my stars so, come December 7 I'm shooting straight and I know where I'm heading.

"And that's towards those titles that at the minute are just out of reach, but sooner or later I'll be able to touch them again."

Giro winner Carapaz to miss Tour of Britain over visa issue



AFP
London, United Kingdom

Giro d'Italia winner Richard Carapaz cannot compete in the Tour of Britain as he has not been granted a visa on time, his Movistar Team announced yesterday.

Ecuadoran Carapaz, set to join Team Ineos next season, had been due to race alongside fellow Tour of Britain debutant and teammate Mikel Landa in the race starting today.

visa for the Tour of Britain has not been granted in time for him to travel."

The team said Hector Carretero would be replacing the 26-year-old, who won his first Grand Tour event in Italy earlier this year.

Team Ineos this week confirmed the signing of Carapaz from the start of the 2020 season.

He will be joining an impressive stable of riders that includes Tour de France winners Chris Froome, Geraint Thomas and Egan Bernal.

The Tour of Britain starts in Glasgow on Saturday and finishes in Manchester on September 14.

HORSE RACING

Sheikh Mohamed's Amyr Du Soleil wins Group 2

Agencies
Toulouse, France

Having demolished the field last time out in the Prix Tidjani (Group 3 PA), His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Khalifa al-Thani's Amyr Du Soleil once again pulled off an extraordinary performance in Toulouse yesterday to win the French Arabian Breeders' Challenge - Poulains (Group 2 PA).

The three-year-old colt by Amer quickly took control of the field up on the lead, easily pulling clear of the racing pack under Julien Augé in the straight to win by two and a half lengths.

Mme Robert Litt-owned and Philippe Sogorb-trained Emportio was the runner-up under

Jack Martin. Good Des Vialettes, owned by Mohamed bin Fahad al-Attayah and trained by Francois Rohaut, was three lengths behind in third under Francois Xavier Bertras.

"We have always thought a lot of this colt," trainer Fourcy commented after the race. "He's physically still a bit immature, but he has so much class. When he is a four-year-old, he will be a horse for the Arc weekend. He is generous in his races, but he has a good character and is easy to manage."

Amyr Du Soleil was bred by Lisa and Pierre Deymonaz. He is out of Balladore (Dormane), a full sister to Dormah de Brugère, a seven-time winner including the Jumeirah International Stakes (Group 2 PA) and the Arabian International Stakes (Group 2 PA).



Julien Augé (left) rides Amyr Du Soleil to victory in the French Arabian Breeders' Challenge - Poulains (Group 2 PA) in Toulouse, France, yesterday. (Robert Polin)

TWENTY20 INTERNATIONAL

Malinga takes four wickets in four as Sri Lanka claim consolation win



Sri Lanka's Lasith Malinga celebrates his hat-trick against New Zealand in the third T20 international in Kandy, Sri Lanka, yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
Kandy, Sri Lanka

Lasith Malinga claimed four wickets in four balls for the second time in his career to lead Sri Lanka to a 37-run consolation win over New Zealand in the third Twenty20 international yesterday.

Malinga returned career-best figures of 5-6 to bundle New Zealand, who won the series 2-1, out for 88 while chasing 126 in Kandy.

The 36-year-old Malinga bowled Colin Munro for 12 on the third ball of his second over to become the first T20 bowler to claim 100 wickets as he began his demolition of the Kiwi batting.

He then sent Hamish Rutherford, Colin de Grandhomme and Ross Taylor back to the pavilion on balls four, five and six as he raised the roof in front of a raucous home crowd. New Zealand slipped to 15 for four.

"Yorker was my best ball, I only try my best to bowl the right line and right length," Malinga, known for bowling yorkers with his slinging action, said.

"Really happy that we won the match, I am a wicket-taking bowler when I play for Sri Lanka... I always want to give all my experience to the youngsters before the (T20) World Cup (next year)."

It was only the third time a bowler had taken four wickets in as many balls in internationals, after Malinga himself against South Africa at the 2007 World Cup, and Afghanistan's Rashid Khan earlier this year.

He now has five hat-tricks in international cricket to his name, with three in one-day internationals and two in T20Is.

Malinga, who surpassed Pakistan spinner Shahid Afridi's tally of 97 scalps to become the lead-

ing T20 international wicket-taker on Sunday, came back in his third over to get Tim Seifert for eight and register his second five-wicket haul in T20Is.

The veteran speedster, who retired from Test cricket in 2011 and played his farewell one-day international in July, has improved his T20 tally to 104 wickets in 76 matches.

Akila Dananjaya backed up his captain's effort with two wickets while Lakshan Sandakan wrapped up the win in 16 overs after trapping Seth Rance lbw for eight.

New Zealand skipper Tim Southee remained unbeaten on 28 and praised his opposite number for a "great spell" of bowling.

"Credit to Sri Lanka for the way they played and Malinga's spell just broke our back today," said Southee. "He's done it in the past, and it was a great spell from a class T20 bowler."

Earlier, spinners Mitchell Santner and Todd Astle shared three wickets each to keep Sri Lanka to 125 for eight after the hosts elected to bat first.

Santner returned impressive bowling figures of 3-12 from his four overs including a maiden with his left-arm spin.

Opener Danushka Gunathilaka top-scored with 30 before falling to Astle's leg-spin as Sri Lanka lost their way after the power-play.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Niroshan Dickwella (24), Lahiru Madushanka (20) and Wanindu Hasaranga (14 not out) were the only other home players to reach double figures.

BRIEF SCORES: Sri Lanka 125 for 8 (Gunathilaka 30; Santner 3-12, Astle 3-28) **beat New Zealand 88 all out** (Southee 28 not out; Malinga 5-6) **by 37 runs**

ASHES

Hazlewood rips through England

Paceman takes four wickets as England still need 98 runs to avoid following on

Reuters
Manchester, United Kingdom

Australian paceman Josh Hazlewood ripped through England with three crucial late wickets in the final session to leave Joe Root's side trailing by 297 runs on 200-5 in their first innings after the third day of the fourth Ashes Test yesterday.

England still need 98 runs to avoid following on and that will be no formality after Hazlewood undid so much of the good work from Rory Burns (81) and Joe Root (71) earlier in the day.

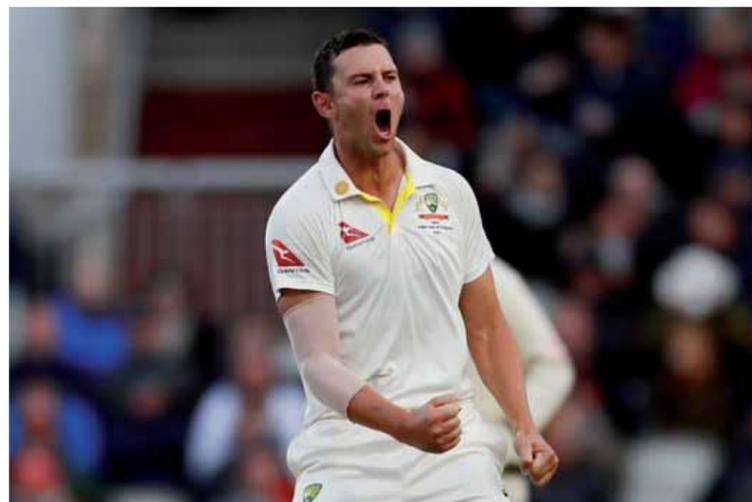
The five-match series is standing at 1-1 and victory for Australia, who declared their first innings after 497-8, would ensure they retain The Ashes ahead of the final Test at the Oval next week.

Tim Paine's side will surely fancy their chances of achieving in Manchester what slipped through their hands at Headingley while England need to stem the tourists' momentum on Saturday and give themselves a chance of saving the Test on Sunday.

Heavy rain wiped out the entire morning session at Old Trafford and England quickly lost night-watchman Craig Overton — who was caught by first innings double centurion Steve Smith at second slip off Hazlewood.

The Burns-Root pairing put on 141 for the third wicket before Hazlewood removed Burns with a fine delivery that was edged to a gleeful Smith.

Burns had looked confident throughout an impressive innings in which he picked up his



Australia's Josh Hazlewood celebrates taking the wicket of England's Jason Roy on the third day of the fourth Ashes Test at Old Trafford in Manchester, United Kingdom, yesterday. (Reuters)

third score of fifty or over in this series, taking advantage of Australia's over-reliance on short-pitched deliveries.

He then showed tenacity to deal with Pat Cummins, who received no reward for a 10-over spell where he combined hostility with spot-on line and length.

The nearest Cummins came to a breakthrough was when Root edged him between keeper Paine and David Warner at first slip.

DEJECTED EXPRESSION

It was Hazlewood who got Root out — making it two wickets in 11 balls — rapping him on the pads with the England skipper's de-

jected expression removing any need for a review.

Jason Roy, demoted from the opener slot, was joined by Ben Stokes and England badly needed a lengthy partnership from the two strokeplayers, but Hazlewood had other ideas.

The bowler removed Roy's middle stump clean out of the ground with another delivery that nipped back off the seam and the jubilant response of the Australians in the field illustrated the significance of the wicket.

It was a devastating spell of 3-15 in 27 balls from the 28-year-old and one which will leave England, whose attack

struggled to penetrate, wondering what bowler James Anderson might have been able to provide for them had he not been injured.

The surface may be a good batting track but Hazlewood and Cummins managed to extract just enough movement and the occasional sharp lift to trouble England in a way that only Stuart Broad got close to for the hosts.

Hazlewood ended the day with figures of 4-48 after bad light cut play short, to the relief of batsmen Stokes and Jonny Bairstow.

"It makes me happy when Josh comes on and takes wickets

Scorecard	
AUSTRALIA 1st inn	497-8 dec
ENGLAND 1st inn (o/n: 23-1)	
R. Burns c Smith b Hazlewood	81
J. Denly c Wade b Cummins	4
C. Overton c Smith b Hazlewood	5
J. Root lbw b Hazlewood	71
J. Roy b Hazlewood	22
B. Stokes not out	7
J. Bairstow not out	2
Extras	(lb6, nb2) 8
Total	(5 wkts, 74 overs) 200
Fall of wickets:	1-10 (Denly), 2-25 (Overton), 3-166 (Burns), 4-175 (Root), 5-196 (Roy)
Bowling:	Starc 11-5-41-0; Hazlewood 20-4-48-4 (1nb); Cummins 17-4-37-1 (1nb); Lyon 26-3-68-0

at the other end straight away," said Cummins.

"We are pretty happy being (nearly) 300 ahead. It was a tough day of Test cricket. To get those three wickets late, we feel really in the game."

Burns provided evidence that England may have found at least one opening batsman during this series but with those who followed him unable to show similar resilience, he was left hoping for another, Headingly-style, comeback.

"The way that game went, I think anything is possible. We are not that far behind in this fixture. We are a couple of partnerships away from making them make a play again. It is about putting pressure back on them and playing well tomorrow," he said.

FIRST TEST

Skipper Rashid's all-round show puts Afghanistan on top

AFP
Chittagong, Bangladesh

Spin sensation Rashid Khan starred with bat and ball yesterday as Afghanistan took command in the one-off Test against Bangladesh in Chittagong.

Rashid hit 51 off 61 balls to take Afghanistan to 342 in their first innings and then claimed 4-47 to leave Bangladesh struggling at 194 for eight at stumps on the second day.

Mominul Haque scored the only half-century for Bangladesh, 52 off 71 balls, while Mosaddek Hossain remained unbeaten on 44 to spare some blushes for the home side against the Test minnows.

Bangladesh lost a wicket in the very first over of their innings when Yamin Ahmadzai dismissed opener Shadman Islam for nought but Soumya Sarkar and Liton Das steadied the innings with a 49-run stand.

Mohamed Nabi removed Sou-



Afghanistan's Rashid Khan (right) delivers a ball on the second day of the one-off Test against Bangladesh in Chittagong yesterday. (AFP)

mya leg-before for 17 before Rashid introduced himself in the attack with immediate impact as he bowled Liton for 33.

Rashid unleashed further destruction in his fifth over, trapping Shakib Al Hasan leg before for 11 and removing Mushfiqur Rahim for a duck two balls later as Bangladesh were reduced to

88-5 at tea.

They did no better after play resumed in the final session as Rashid, who made his debut as the youngest ever Test captain in this Test, bowled Mahmudullah Riyadh for seven and left others with little clue against his leg-spin.

Mominul launched a counter-

attack to bring his fifty off 69 balls but paid the price for his aggression as he gave a catch to Asghar Afghan at mid-off off Mohamed Nabi, who finished the day with 2-53.

Mosaddek survived the day with tail-ender Taijul Islam, 14 not out, but Bangladesh still face a mountain to climb, trailing Afghanistan by 148 runs in the first innings with just two wickets in hand.

"We believe that we have a chance to win the match. Today the rain favoured Bangladesh batsmen as the ball became wet and it was not easy to turn away," said Afghanistan spinner Qais Ahmed, referring to a brief rain interval in the final session.

Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan lamented their lack of application with bat.

"Maybe we could apply better. Mosaddek and Taijul showed it was possible to survive here. If we had applied better we could have been in a better position," he said.

Rashid earlier led Afghanis-

tan's batting charge with his maiden Test fifty after they lost early wickets, having resumed the second day's play at 271-5.

Former skipper Asghar, who was unbeaten on 88 overnight, managed to add just four runs to his score before gifting his wicket to left-arm spinner Taijul, just eight runs short of what would have been his first Test century.

Taijul then bowled the other overnight batsman Afsar Zazai for 41 but Rashid, making his debut as the youngest-ever Test captain, launched a counterattack.

Shakib struck back to remove tail-enders Qais Ahmad and Yamin Ahmadzai for nine and zero respectively but Rashid fought on, bringing up his 50 in as many balls.

Off-spinner Mehidy Hasan took a sharp catch off his own bowling to stop Rashid's onslaught and end Afghanistan's innings.

Taijul finished with 4-116 for Bangladesh while Shakib and off-spinner Nayeem Hasan claimed two wickets each.

Scorecard

AFGHANISTAN 1st inn (o/n: 271-5)	4-0-9-0, Hossain 1-0-1-0
I. Zadrán c Mahmudullah b T. Islam	21
I. Janat b T. Islam	9
R. Shah c Sarkar b N. Hasan	102
H. Shahidi c Sarkar b Mahmudullah	14
A. Afghan c Rahim b T. Islam	92
M. Nabi b N. Hasan	0
A. Zazai b T. Islam	41
R. Khan c&b M. Hasan	51
Q. Ahmad c Haque b Shakib	9
Y. Ahmadzai c Sarkar b Shakib	0
Z. Khan not out	0
Extras	(lb1, nb2) 3
Total	(all out, 117 overs) 342
FoW: 1-19 (Ihsanullah), 2-48 (Ibrahim), 3-77 (Hashmatullah), 4-197 (Rahmat), 5-197 (Nabi), 6-278 (Asghar), 7-299 (Afsar), 8-322 (Qais), 9-327 (Yamin), 10-342 (Rashid)	
Bowling: T. Islam 41-5-116-4 (nb2), Shakib 22-1-64-2, M. Hasan 28-5-73-1, N. Hasan 13-0-43-2, Mahmudullah 4-0-9-1, Sarkar 4-0-26-0, Haque	
4-0-9-0, Hossain 1-0-1-0	
AFGHANISTAN 1st inn	
S. Islam c Zazai b Ahmadzai	0
S. Sarkar lbw b Nabi	17
L. Das b Rashid	33
M. Haque c Asghar b Nabi	52
Shakib Al Hasan lbw b Rashid	11
M. Rahim c Zadrán b Rashid	0
Mahmudullah b Rashid	7
M. Hossain not out	44
M. Hasan b Qais	11
T. Islam not out	14
Extras	(b4, lb1) 5
Total	(8 wickets, 67 overs) 194
FoW: 1-0 (Shadman), 2-38 (Soumya), 3-54 (Liton), 4-88 (Shakib), 5-88 (Mushfiqur), 6-104 (Mahmudullah), 7-130 (Mominul), 8-146 (Mehidy)	
Bowling: Ahmadzai 10-2-21-1, Nabi 22-6-53-2, Zahir 9-1-46-0, Rashid 18-3-47-4, Qais 8-2-22-1	