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GOLF

Tiger trims events to stay fresh but eyes Tokyo Olympics

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FOOTBALL

Qatar will be a better team after Copa America: Sanchez

'It's going to be a big challenge but at the same time it's also a great opportunity to gain some great experience'

By Anil John
Doha

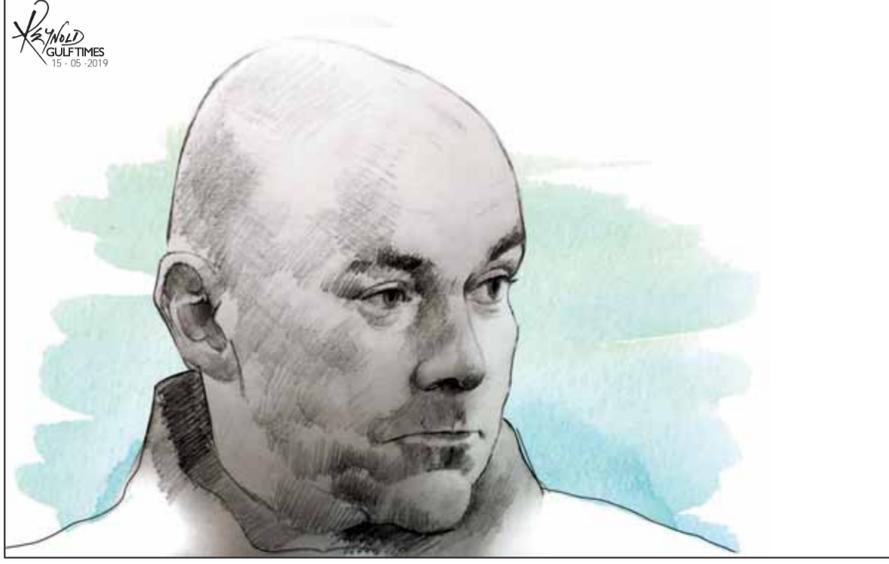
Motivation, commitment: two words Felix Sanchez cannot cut out from a conversation, two words that form the very focal point of his life in football, two simple words that are not out of place in the context of a school competition as well as that of a global sporting showpiece.

Sanchez is a not a man with a penchant for blather. He gives few press conferences, reluctantly attends gala dinners, shies away from publicity and prefers to be dressed in tees and jeans. He is a man of action, who is most comfortable in the company of his players.

Twelve years since he took a flight to Qatar from Spain to work with the Aspire Academy's football project, Sanchez has come a long way. Several aspiring footballers with whom he first interacted when they were mere kids are now part of the Asian Cup winning national team. Now they have set their sights on making a mark on an entirely new and somewhat unlikely stage for Asian teams - the Copa America, the oldest continental football championship in the world which debuted in 1916 when it was called the South American Championship.

As far as Qatar is concerned, it's a tournament that existed only in a somewhat mythical realm where Pele (1959) and other South American legends dazzled worldwide audiences with their distinct flair and style. Now thanks to an invite as a guest team from hosts Brazil, Qatar can get a taste of the unique culture of football that makes teams such as Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay stand out.

"The Copa America is a totally different competition. For the first time ever Qatar is getting an opportunity to play against some of the best teams in South



America. It's going to be a very big challenge," Sanchez said during a press conference yesterday.

The 12-team event which kicks off on June 16 and concludes on July 7 sees Qatar placed in Group B along with Argentina, Colombia and Paraguay, teams against whom Qatar have never played before in tournaments at the senior level.

"It's going to be a big challenge but at the same time it's also a great opportunity to gain some great experience. Many of the teams in the tournament, like Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay have won the World Cup several times. But our players have the motivation, the commitment. They are looking forward to it."

Sanchez added that after the Asian Cup triumph earlier this year, Qatari players have hardly had any rest with the season yet to get over.

"It has been a long season. Two of the clubs from which the majority of the national team players are (Al Sadd and Al Duhail) are playing the Amir Cup final after their league engagements. They are also involved in the AFC Champions League. But they are ready to give their everything (at the Copa America)."

Sanchez has already started training with players who are available while waiting for the others to complete the season.

"The training has started but there is still time for the final team of 23 players to be selected and submitted by the end

of the month from an initial list of 40. It's only normal that at the end of a season you have players with injuries. We have to deal with that.

"As of now, Bassam (al-Rawi) seems to have suffered an injury. We are waiting for scans. We are also waiting on the fitness of Karim Boudiaf and Sultan al-Brake plus some others."

Qatar will hold a training camp in the US before flying out to Brazil for the tournament, but before that they have the simple matter of facing the Selecao in an international friendly on June 5 at the iconic Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro. It's a match that the Qatar football community is greatly excited about, and sure enough the question popped up as to how his

tract through to 2022 when Qatar hosts the FIFA World Cup.



Qatar coach Felix Sanchez (R) and media manager Ali Salat smile during a press conference yesterday.

players would tackle Neymar. "There are not many difficult things to do than playing against Brazil," Sanchez said. "Of course, if Neymar plays we will try our best to minimise his impact on the match but they also have other great players."

After the match against Brazil on June 5, Qatar will have a closed door game against a club team on June 9 before taking on Paraguay on June 16.

Sanchez added that he was not thinking about the results in the tournament. "We will try our best to compete. Let's see how far we can go. In any case the experience of playing in the Copa America would be of great help to the players. They will be much better players after that. It will help them for the big challenges ahead, especially the 2022 World Cup."

Sanchez also thanked the Qatar Football Association for extending his con-

tract through to 2022 when Qatar hosts the FIFA World Cup.

"I am grateful to the QFA President (Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani) for trusting me and my team. Of course our priority was to continue working in Qatar and carry on with the work we were doing. We hope to keep giving good results."

He, however, said whatever success he achieved with the team was the result of teamwork.

"It has been 12 years since I am here. The country had big plans for football and I am personally proud and honoured to be part of the journey. But there were lots of efforts put in by others, most notably Aspire, the QFA, the medical and technical staff.

"They created the perfect environment for me to stay motivated and committed and also to keep the players motivated and committed."

CRICKET

Bairstow, Roy dazzle as England canter to win

AFP
Bristol

Jonny Bairstow's commanding hundred was the centrepiece of England's dominant six-wicket win over Pakistan in the third one-day international at Bristol yesterday as the World Cup hosts showed they could chase, as well as set, a target.

England generally prefer batting first but captain Eoin Morgan decided to give them experience of chasing just weeks away from the World Cup by opting to field first after winning the toss.

Bairstow's 128 in a score of 359 for four - England's second highest winning total batting second in an ODI - vindicated Morgan's decision and left his side 2-0 up with two to play in a five-match series.

Test captain Joe Root made 43 as Pakistan became increasingly ragged in the field, England winning with 31 balls - or more than five overs - to spare.

Earlier, Imam-ul-Haq's excellent career-best 151 saw Pakistan to 358 for nine.

That left England with a seemingly



England's Jonny Bairstow plays a shot at The Bristol County Ground.

challenging target, particularly as they had rested Jos Buttler following his match-winning 110 not out in the second ODI at Southampton on Saturday.

But Bairstow and opening partner Jason Roy, who made 76 after Shaheen Shah Afridi dropped an easy chance to catch him at mid-off on 21, shared a blistering stand of 159 inside 18 overs.

The pair took advantage of a good pitch, short boundaries, fast outfield and an inexperienced Pakistan attack - Mohamed Amir was again ruled out with chicken pox - to repeatedly send the ball soaring over the ropes.

Roy set the tone with a huge straight six off Afridi and flat-batted medium-pace Faheem Ashraf's first ball straight back over the bowler's head for another. Roy eventually sliced Faheem to Asif Ali at cover-point, having hit eight fours and four sixes.

Faheem almost had a second wicket when he was unable to cling on to a tough caught and bowled chance off a hard-hit Bairstow drive when the batsman was on 86.

Bairstow, severe on anything short, went to his seventh ODI hundred, and first against Pakistan, off 74 balls including 12 fours and three sixes.

He eventually fell when he bottom-



Pakistan's Imam-ul-Haq celebrates reaching 150 runs in Bristol yesterday.

edged a pull off Junaid Khan into his stumps, with England on their way to victory at 234 for two in the 29th over.

Earlier, Chris Woakes bolstered his chances of being included in England's final 15-man World Cup squad with four wickets for 67 runs in a maximum 10 overs.

But Joe Denly's prospects suffered a setback, with the leg-spinner - playing in place of the rested Adil Rashid - bowling a couple of full tosses in a solitary over costing nine runs before he was removed from the attack.

Woakes reduced Pakistan to 27 for two, a full-length ball having Fakhar Zaman - fresh from a hundred at Southampton - edging to Root at second slip before a sharp off-cutter bowled Babar Azam.

But Harris Sohail made a run-a-ball 41 before he was run out going for a sharp single by bowler Tom Curran kicking the ball onto the striker's end stumps. But left-handed opener Imam went to his sixth hundred in 27 ODIs - and first against England - off 97 balls.

The nephew of Pakistan great and selection chief Inzamam-ul-Haq, upped his tempo by driving left-arm quick David Willey for six.

Imam surpassed his previous ODI best of 128 against Zimbabwe at Bulawayo last year before he was bowled, giving himself room, by Curran.

The 23-year-old's innings was the highest individual score by a Pakistan batsman against England in an ODI, surpassing the 138 made by Fakhar at Southampton.

SPOTLIGHT

Shadab cleared for Pakistan's World Cup stint

The 20-year-old had hepatitis but is now free of the virus, says PCB



File photo of Pakistan cricketer Shadab Khan.

AFP
Karachi

Fast-rising Shadab Khan was yesterday cleared to play the World Cup later this month after latest blood tests showed he was clear of previously diagnosed hepatitis.

The 20-year-old was last month withdrawn from Pakistan's squad for the one-off Twenty20 and five-match one-day series in England after the hepatitis virus was found in his blood, also leaving him doubtful for the World Cup.

But the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) says he is now clear and will be part of the World Cup starting in UK from May 30.

"The leg-spinner will now leave for London tomorrow where he will consult Dr Patrick Kennedy on Friday, 17 May, before joining the team in Bristol on Monday, 20 May," said a PCB release.

Shadab will join the team but will continue to be monitored for team's World Cup warm-up matches scheduled for 24 and 26 May against Afghanistan and Bangladesh respectively, are subject to his fitness and the

team management's decision, added the release.

The leg-spinner, who is also a handy batsman low down the order, is seen as key for Pakistan's World Cup campaign which starts with a match against the West Indies in Nottingham on May 31.

Shadab said he was delighted at the news.

"I am delighted to know that the blood tests are negative and I can now return to competitive cricket. I was always very confident that I would fully recover from the viral infection and will be available for the World Cup.

"Having played and won the

ICC Champions Trophy 2017, I understand the importance, flavour and glamour of global events and what success in such events mean to the players and the public.

"I am looking forward to featuring in the World Cup and will leave no stone unturned in helping Pakistan put up a strong show.

"It has been difficult to stay away from international cricket and watch Pakistan play outstandingly – both in Cardiff and Southampton. As a professional cricketer, you want to be part of such games.

Pakistan coach Mickey

Arthur welcomed the news.

"It is fabulous news and on behalf of the Pakistan cricket team, I look forward to welcoming Shadab back in the squad. Shadab is one of the finest of his generation and is an influential figure in the team," Arthur is quoted as saying in the release.

"Shadab's inclusion also balances what is a young but extremely talented squad. I understand it will take Shadab some time to be back at his brilliant best as he has not played cricket for a few weeks, but our first game is on 31 May and he has got two weeks to regain complete form and fitness."

FOCUS

Afridi faces flak for saying he won't allow his daughters to play outdoor sports

AFP
Karachi

Former Pakistani all-rounder **Shahid Afridi** battled away accusations of misogyny this week as critics lashed out at the cricket star's admission that he refuses to let his daughters play outdoor sports.

The remarks were just the latest controversy stemming from Afridi's tell-all autobiography *Game Changer* released in Pakistan and India last week.

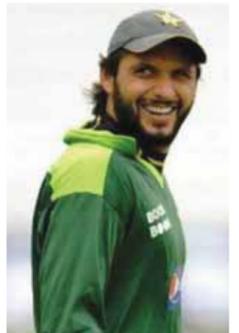
"It's for social and religious reasons that I've made this decision regarding my daughters not competing in public sporting activities and their mother agrees with me," wrote Afridi. "The feminists can say what they want; as a conservative Pakistani father, I've made my decision," he added.

In the book, the cricketer also unleashed withering criticism against old teammates – including erstwhile World Cup captain and current Prime Minister Imran Khan – and admitted to being slightly older than previously reported, drawing accusations he was not the youngest player to set the record for scoring 100 runs in an international.

However, his comments about his four daughters – who are aged between 10 and 20 years old – may have proven to be the most galling to the public with social media users labelling the all-rounder a "misogynist" and "hypocrite".

"His daughters, his decisions? Really?? So the girls' voices and choices don't matter? Not even when they're adults? Because #FatherHasSpoken," said Asha Bedar on Twitter.

Pakistani author Bina Shah also roasted Afridi, telling the BBC his decision was an exam-



ple of "Pakistani macho culture that says I am the father, I can say what my daughters are going to do and not do, and there is not a thing that you can do to stop me."

Others pointed to the examples set by other athletes on the issue, including Egyptian football star at Liverpool Mohamed Salah who has advocated for the equal treatment of women in the Islamic world. Salah made headlines over the weekend after a viral video showed him proudly celebrating as his four-year-old daughter scored a goal ahead of Liverpool's last game of the season at Anfield.

But back in Pakistan, Afridi pushed back at the criticism. "I don't judge anyone or meddle in people's life," Afridi tweeted on Sunday.

"I expect the same too from others. May Allah bless my daughters and daughters/women all over the world! Let people be. My daughters are very precious to me! My life revolves around them."

Afridi retired from professional cricket in 2016 but he continues to be a mainstay on Pakistani television, frequently starring in commercials while also attending high-profile sporting events.

COMMITTED

Watson 'gave blood' for Chennai during IPL final

AFP
New Delhi

Bloodstains on the leg of Shane Watson's trousers during the IPL final as he scored a blistering 80 for Chennai Super Kings were revealed yesterday to be from a cut that needed six stitches when he finished.

The 37-year-old Australian batsman was on the losing side in the end, but teammate Harbhajan Singh hailed Watson's courage in continuing to play despite suffering a gashed knee while diving for a catch.

"Respect brother what a LEGEND @srwatson33 given sweat, blood and everything for the team.. INSPIRING," Singh wrote on Instagram.

The Indian off-spinner posted a picture of Watson with blood-stained yellow trousers while batting in the

Twenty20 final against the Mumbai Indians, and said the opener needed six stitches after the valiant innings.

"Can you guys see the blood on his knee.. He got 6 stitches after the game," Harbhajan wrote.

"Got injured while diving but continue to bat without telling anyone," the bowler added.

Watson smashed 80 off 59 deliveries only to see his team lose by one run.

Watson was run out going for an unlikely second in the final over, and Mumbai pacesman Lasith Malinga denied Chennai the two runs needed off the last ball to win the game and a record fourth title.

Watson's return to the IPL next season remains uncertain. He has already bid farewell to Australia's Big Bash T20 tournament, and Chennai captain MS Dhoni indicated he would make changes to the batting lineup for next year.

India's Lakshmi becomes first female ICC match referee

New Delhi: India's GS Lakshmi has become the first female match referee after the International Cricket Council (ICC) named the 51-year-old in its list of elite match officials yesterday. Earlier this month, Australian Claire Polosak became the first woman to officiate in a men's one-day international in the final of the World Cricket League Division 2 in Windhoek.

"We are committed to ensuring greater gender parity among our officials, but all appointments are made

purely on merit," Adrian Griffith, ICC Senior Manager – Umpires and Referees, said in a statement.

Australian Eloise Sheridan, who was the reserve umpire for two matches in the men's Big Bash League 2018-19, has joined Polosak on the ICC Development Panel of Umpires as its eighth member, the world governing body said. "Elevation is as a result of a thorough evaluation process that identifies the most talented match officials breaking through to an international level," Griffith added.

BOTTOMLINE

From street cricket to world's best spinner: Pakistan hails Sana

AFP
Karachi

Pakistan showered praise this week on **Sana Mir**, the former women's cricket team captain who rose from bowling in the streets to become the most successful spinner in women's one-day international history.

The 33-year-old took her 147th wicket in her 118th game when she dismissed South Africa's Sune Luus in the third one-day international (ODI) of the ICC Women's Championship in Benoni on Sunday.

That took her past Anisa Mohamed of the West Indies and Australia's Lisa Sthalekar – both at 146 wickets – to the pride of Pakistanis, who hailed the achievement with joy on social media and in proud newspaper editorials.

"Congratulations, @mir_sana05!" the ICC tweeted, as Pakistan's largest English-language newspapers – Dawn and the Express Tribune – both published editorials Tuesday celebrating the feat in a deeply patriarchal country where women's sport



has long been marginalised.

"Kudos to you girl!" tweeted the German embassy in Islamabad.

"Makes us all proud," added Maleeha Lodhi, Pakistan's ambassador to the UN.

Mir recalled the obstacles against her in an interview pub-

lished by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB).

"The journey started by proving at every street, where I played cricket, that girls could play this sport. We didn't have any role models, girls taking part in cricket was not that common," she was quoted as saying.

"From street cricket to playing on the grounds and moving to stadia donning the Pakistan kit were moments of immense pride." Former Pakistan captain and current chief selector Urooj Mumtaz congratulated her former colleague, calling her an inspiration for women.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Robertson vows Liverpool will battle City again

'It is an incredible squad and I love being a part of it'

AFP
London

Liverpool defender Andy Robertson has warned Manchester City that Jurgen Klopp's close-knit team are determined to stay together until they win the Premier League. City pipped Liverpool to the title on the last day of the season with a 4-1 win at Brighton that rendered the second placed Reds' victory against Wolves irrelevant.

Liverpool finished just one point behind City, but despite the agonising near-miss, morale among Jurgen Klopp's team remains high as they prepare for the Champions League final against Tottenham on June 1.

And Scotland captain Robertson is confident Liverpool's key players will remain at Anfield for the long-term, making them perfectly placed to renew their rivalry with City for years to come.

"We are a tight-knit group, a young group, so hopefully we will be here for many years and we will be a better team in terms of maturity and experience next year," Robertson said. "It is an incredible squad and I love being a part of it. I am sure we have learned a lot of lessons this season, and we just need to take that into next. Fingers-crossed we don't lose anyone. We are a tight group and we don't want to lose anyone. We will go into next season as strong as ever."

With a second successive Champions League final on the horizon, Robertson's fellow Liverpool defender Virgil Van Dijk feels this season is the beginning of something special at Anfield. Van Dijk also referenced the spirit within the club as a whole, and the relationship the players have with supporters as being key to that success.

"With the level we have shown this season, the consistency we have, we have to build on it, try to do it again next season," Van Dijk said. "That's what we all aim for, and I am looking forward to it already. There is a togetherness we have throughout the whole club. It is also the connection we have with the fans that helps us through tough, tough moments, through tough games. The fans will always be there and that's a special thing



Andy Robertson is confident Liverpool's key players will remain at Anfield for the long-term. (AFP)

to know, and one of the big reasons I joined Liverpool."

City manager Pep Guardiola admitted Liverpool had given them their toughest test, forcing them to win their final 14 league matches to finish on 98 points – the second highest total in the Premier League era. Liverpool finished 25 points ahead of third-placed Chelsea and 31 in front of sixth-placed Manchester United.

Robertson backed Liverpool to stay a step ahead of the chasing pack next term and made it clear City can expect another powerful challenge from Merseyside. "Man City know, hopefully, we are here to stay. We know they are definitely here to stay, they are incredible," he said.

"It's been a very good season for us and we have just fallen short to a world-class team. Ninety-seven points wins every

single league apart from last season so if we do that again we will keep knocking on the door and we won't be far off it. "Man City were 14 games unbeaten and for them to do that without dropping a point was incredible. Fair play to them. All the teams have to catch us as there was quite a gap between second and third. They all need to come up to us, and if they do, it will be an incredible title race next season."

Liverpool face intense 'pre-season' ahead of Spurs final, says Klopp

Liverpool: Jurgen Klopp says he will put his Liverpool players through a two-week "pre-season" ahead of their Champions League final against Tottenham Hotspur.

The players have been given a few days off to recover from a gruelling Premier League campaign in which they

pushed Manchester City to the final day in the title race, eventually losing out by one point.

They will reconvene next week to prepare for the showpiece meeting with Spurs at Atletico Madrid's Wanda Metropolitano Stadium on June 1. "We have to do a couple of things in preparation

for the Champions League, media stuff," Klopp told the club's website.

"We have to do that, then the boys will have a couple of days off and then we have two proper weeks as a pre-season for the Champions League final. We will do that, we will play that, (hopefully) win it, come home and then the people get

what they deserve." Liverpool, who defeated Barcelona to reach their second consecutive Champions League final appearance, are bidding for their sixth European Cup, which would be their first piece of silverware under Klopp. Tottenham came back 0-2 to beat Ajax.

BUNDESLIGA

Bayern Munich icon Robben dreaming of fairytale farewell

AFP
Berlin

Departing Dutch star Arjen Robben has said that he is still undecided about what to do when he leaves Bayern Munich, and admitted that he may still retire from football altogether. The 35-year-old winger is set to leave Munich after 10 years at the end of the season, and has been linked with clubs as diverse as Inter Milan and his hometown club Groningen.

At a press conference in Munich yesterday, Robben said that he still didn't know what life after Bayern held for him. "I am late making my decision because of my injury. I wanted to get back on the pitch first," said Robben, who had been sidelined since November before returning to action against Hanover two weeks ago.

"My wife would have preferred it otherwise, to be honest," he said. "It is not an easy decision to make. If you decide that you are going to keep playing, you have to find a place where everything is just right, not just in terms of football but also for my family."

Asked whether he might stop playing altogether, Robben said it was possible. "It is an option, but I don't know whether it will happen," he said. He said that were he to play against Bayern in the future, he would have no problem celebrating against his old club.

"Everyone is different, but with all due respect I think it is a bit silly when players don't celebrate against their former clubs. Football is football," he said.

The Dutchman won the Champions League with Bayern in 2013, and now hopes to win an eighth Bundesliga title in his

last home game for Bayern this weekend. Bayern can wrap up a seventh successive league title if they beat Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday, and Robben said that he had "goosebumps" thinking about the game.

"To be crowned champions on Saturday, after 10 years, in front of 70,000 fans at a full Allianz Arena. There is nothing better. It will be a very special game, I have played it out three times in my head already. Maybe I can play for 90 minutes and score two goals," said the Dutchman, whose Bundesliga tally currently stands at 98.

Robben said that he had not expected to become a club legend when he joined Bayern from Real Madrid in 2009. "It was a difficult step for me. My aim was to win the Champions League, and it didn't look very likely at Bayern then," he said.

Robben scored an 89th minute winner for Bayern in the 2013 Champions League Final, a year after missing a crucial penalty in their painful final defeat to Chelsea a year earlier. Booned by some Bayern fans after that defeat, Robben said his relationship to the supporters is now strong.

"For me, the appreciation of the fans, not just as a footballer but also as a person, means almost more than winning titles," he said. Robben's Brazilian teammate Rafinha also gave his farewell press conference, after the club confirmed on Saturday that he would leave after eight years in Munich. The 33-year-old full-back broke down in tears as he said goodbye.

"I got an SMS from my mum just after training and she told me to say thank you to my teammates, to everyone at the club," he said. "The friendship I have with people here is the most important thing."



Bayern Munich's Dutch midfielder Arjen Robben. (AFP)

FOCUS

Solskjaer retains coaching staff despite Man United slump

AFP
London

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer will not change his Manchester United coaching staff for next season despite his side's alarming slump in form towards the end of the season. United won just two of their final 12 games of the season to miss out on Champions League qualification and finish 32 points adrift of Premier League champions Manchester City in sixth.

The nadir came in a 2-0 home defeat to relegated Cardiff on the final day of the season, leaving the futures of many of the United squad open to question this summer. Solskjaer was only confirmed as United's new manager on a permanent basis just over six weeks ago, but that decision has also been questioned given the Norwegian's lack of coaching experience at the top echelons of the game.

However, Solskjaer will not rejig his coaching staff with Michael Carrick, Kieran McKen-



na and Mark Dempsey continuing alongside assistant manager Mike Phelan. "They are all going to stay," Solskjaer told United's official app. "I think that's important, that we keep that team going forward. We do bounce off each other and they are some excellent coaches."

United's clearout has already begun with former captain Antonio Valencia and Ander Herrera leaving the club after their contracts expired. Spanish midfielder Herrera is expected to join French champions Paris Saint-Germain, but believes Solskjaer's human qualities make him the right man to turn United's fortunes around. "When you have the players behind you and

wanting to fight for you, part of the job is done," said Herrera. "I believe in karma and if you are a good person, if you are honest and sincere with the players and the fans, sooner or later it will work. I think Ole is the right person because he has qualities and knowledge but also he is a great man and a great person."

United have now gone six years without winning the Premier League title since Alex Ferguson retired and Solskjaer admitted it would be "miraculous" for the Red Devils to be challenging Manchester City and Liverpool next season. Aside from Herrera veteran defender Antonio Valencia is also leaving on a free transfer, whilst several others including Juan Mata, inconsistent Paul Pogba and even Belgian striker Romelu Lukaku are thought to be on the way out.

According to *Daily Mirror*, Solskjaer is keen to bring in fresh blood in the shape of Senegalese international central defender Kalidou Koulibaly from Serie A side Napoli and Ivory Coast striker Nicolas Pepe from Ligue 1 outfit Lille.

SPOTLIGHT

Manchester City protest innocence to UEFA amid Champions League ban threat

By David Conn
The Guardian

Manchester City say they have provided "comprehensive proof" of their innocence to the UEFA body investigating allegations of financial fair play (FFP) irregularities, which could be on the verge of recommending a Champions League ban for the club. Members of UEFA's club financial control body (CFCB) investigatory chamber (IC) are thought to have expressed a strong view that City should be referred to the adjudicatory chamber (AC) for a final judgment, and to have recommended a Champions League ban if the allegations of misleading UEFA over FFP are proved.

The IC chairman and chief investigator, Yves Leterme, a senior Belgian politician and former prime minister, is considering whether he agrees with that view, and will refer the club to the AC, which applies sanctions. IC members are thought to have formed the view, following a formal investigation launched in March, that if the AC concludes that City have misstated their income to UEFA, as alleged, the offence is so serious as to warrant a Champions League ban. Any such sanction would have to be imposed by the AC, because the IC's disciplinary powers are limited to a warning,

a reprimand or a fine up to a maximum of €100,000 (£87,000).

City, who have strongly denied any wrongdoing, can be expected to oppose fiercely even the referral of the case by the IC and to appeal against any sanction all the way to the court of arbitration for sport if they consider it necessary, arguing they have proven the allegations are false.

The club, whose team claimed a successive Premier League title on Sunday and can win an unprecedented domestic treble if they beat Watford in the FA Cup final on Saturday, are concerned that the suggestion of a guilty finding and Champions League ban is already damaging and could deter players from signing.

City have been facing allegations since November that they falsely declared as sponsorships millions of pounds that were in fact an investment from the club's owner, Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed al-Nahyan, of Abu Dhabi's ruling family. The allegations are based on "leaked" internal City emails and other documents published by the German magazine *Der Spiegel*.

The principal allegation is that in 2012-13 and 2013-14 City overstated to UEFA – and initially to the Premier League, which operates FFP declarations for its clubs – the amounts paid by their principal sponsor, the Abu Dhabi state airline, Etihad. An email from Simon Pearce, a senior City director

and Abu Dhabi executive, to Jorge Chumillas, then the club's chief financial officer, appears to suggest that Mansour's own holding company, ADUG, paid the bulk of the then £65m annual Etihad sponsorship, while the airline paid only £8m. In another email Chumillas appears to have asked if ADUG paid sponsorship money to Etihad, which then paid it to City. UEFA's FFP rules limit investment by owners to encourage them not to bankroll losses made by overspending on players. City have been sponsored by Etihad and other Abu Dhabi sponsors since shortly after Mansour bought the club in 2008.

City have declared in their accounts investment totalling £1.3bn from Mansour, much of it on players and their wages, which the club could not otherwise afford in the early years of fuelling City's rise, but all commercial income is stated as separate from Mansour. Etihad denied the allegation in November. City initially refused to engage at all with the coverage, stating that the documents were "purportedly hacked or stolen" and the contents taken out of context. After huge media coverage and pressure from other major European clubs, the CFCB's investigatory chamber initially told UEFA it was not set up to investigate alleged misrepresentations by clubs, but Uefa encouraged it to do so, and the formal investigation was launched.

SPOTLIGHT

Roma pull plug on 'beating heart' De Rossi

The 35-year-old will play his final game at home against Parma on May 26, but will not be retiring from professional football



Roma's Daniele De Rossi attends a press conference in Rome yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP
Rome

Captain Daniele De Rossi will bring the curtain down on his 18-year career with Roma at the end of the season after confirming yesterday that the Serie A side had decided not to renew his contract. The 35-year-old former World Cup winning midfielder will play his final game at home against Parma on May 26, but will not be retiring from professional football.

"For 18 years, Daniele has been the beating heart of AS Roma's team," said club president Jim Pallotta. "We will all shed tears when he pulls on the Gi-alorossi shirt for the last time against Parma but we respect his desire to prolong his playing ca-

reer – even if, at almost 36, it will be away from Rome.

"On behalf of everyone at Roma, I'd like to thank Daniele for his incredible dedication to this club and ensure him that our doors will remain open for him to return to the club in a new role whenever he wants."

De Rossi told a press conference he only learned on Monday his contract would not be renewed. "If I had been a manager I would have renewed the contract of player like me," he said. "I think I'm important to them, but the decision must be taken by the club. My only regret is that we only talked a little this year. I hope this (communication) will improve in the future because I am a fan, but I understand it's the club's decision."

De Rossi has spent his entire senior career with his hometown

team coming through the club's academy system.

He made 615 appearances and scored 63 goals for Roma in all competitions winning the Coppa Italia in 2007 and 2008, and the Supercoppa in 2007. He took over the captain's armband from club legend Francesco Totti – the one player ahead of him for Roma appearances – in 2017. De Rossi is also the fourth-most capped player for the Italian national team with 117 appearances.

He retired after Italy failed to qualify for last year's World Cup, missing the tournament for the first time in 60 years.

De Rossi, who has never lifted the Serie A title having finished runner-up eight times, said his biggest regret was last season's Champions League semi-final defeat to Liverpool.

His final game could be a cru-

cial one for Roma's Champions League ambitions next season as last year's European semi-finalists are sixth in Serie A just one point off fourth place with two games to play. "I haven't talked to other teams. Until the game against Genoa, I was convinced about the Champions League and I didn't want to distract anyone," he added.

"I've received 500 messages. I didn't check to see if there were any offers. I still feel like a footballer and I want to continue. I'd be wrong to myself if I stopped now."

De Rossi said he could move away from Italy or eventually join Totti as a Roma director. "Being a director doesn't appeal to me that much, but it would make sense to do that here at Roma," he added. "I was lucky to have played for the team of my heart."

COPPA ITALIA

Atalanta take on Lazio looking to cap dream season

AFP
Rome

Atalanta take on Lazio today looking to cap an impressive season by lifting the Coppa Italia as they fight on two fronts with the Champions League also within their sights. The team from Bergamo have won the Coppa Italia just once in 1963, finishing runners-up in the finals twice since then in 1987 and 1996.

But they dumped four-time Coppa d'Italia holders Juventus out of the tournament 3-0 in the quarter-finals last January to light a spark in Bergamo. "The Champions League is a dream," said Timothy Castagne who scored one of the goals in the Cup win against Juventus, and also inspired a league comeback from three goals down to hold Roma 3-3 in Serie A in January.

"We realised we could fight for fourth place when we completed the comeback against Roma, then beat Juventus in the Coppa Italia. Now we'll try to

end on a high."

Castagne was again on target when Atalanta beat Lazio 3-1 in Serie A earlier this month in the Stadio Olimpico. Lazio also fell 1-0 in Bergamo in the reverse fixture. Gian Piero Gasperini's side are also on track for a first-ever qualification for the Champions League as they sit fourth in Serie A with two games left to play.

"The Coppa Italia final in Rome will be something extraordinary," said Dutch midfielder Marten de Roon. "We will share so many emotions with the fans, with 25,000 following us. It's something very special."

If you are so close to winning a trophy, you have to take it. I want to bring the cup home also for our fans, who have always supported us and are ready to follow us wherever we go."

On their return to the north of Italy after beating Lazio, the players were greeted by more than 4,000 fans and fireworks. "In two weeks we play for everything, of course we want to go to Europe at least."

Atalanta finished seventh in

the league last season. But this season Gasperini's side have been boosted by Colombian Duvan Zapata who arrived on loan from Sampdoria, and is their top scorer with 22 league goals this season. "Tactically coach Gian Piero Gasperini is unrivalled and knows how to prepare matches meticulously," added De Roon.

Atalanta are unbeaten in their last 11 games with eight wins and three draws. For Simone Insigne's Lazio the Coppa Italia could be their only way into Europe next season. The Romans are four points off the Europa League berths with two games left to play, having won just four of their last ten games.

But they have not lost in their last eight Coppa Italia games, their best run in the competition since 1980.

Lazio have won the Coppa Italia six times in their history with their most recent victory in 2013, when they beat city rivals Roma. They will be counting on top scorer Ciro Immobile to lift them, having scored 14 goals in Serie A this season.



Atalanta have won the Coppa Italia just once in 1963 and finished runners-up in 1987 and 1996. (AFP)

Neymar scores name win in EU court ruling

Brussels: Brazilian superstar Neymar scored a legal win yesterday as a top EU court ruled against a businessman who tried to claim copyright on the world's most expensive footballer's name. The General Court of the European Union said that Carlos Moreira had acted in "bad faith" when he tried to trademark the name "Neymar" in 2012, confirming a decision by the EU Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) to invalidate the registration.

The court rejected arguments from Moreira, who applied to register "Neymar" as a trademark for clothes, footwear and hats in December 2012, that he had little knowledge of football and simply liked the sound of the word. "The Court upholds the decision of EUIPO that Mr Moreira was acting in bad faith when he filed the application for registration of the mark 'NEYMAR,'" the court said.

EUIPO ruled in Neymar's favour when he challenged Moreira's registration in 2016, prompting the Portuguese businessman to take the case to the General Court, the EU's second-highest tribunal. Moreira claimed that when he registered

the name, he did not know Neymar – who had been named South American Footballer of the Year in 2011 and attracted interest from a host of top European clubs – was a rising star. The court dismissed the argument, saying it was clear Moreira had "more than a little knowledge of the world of football".

It is the second EU trademark victory inside a year for South American megastars, after Argentina and Barcelona attacker Lionel Messi won a battle to register his name, seeing off a seven-year challenge by Spanish cycling gear manufacturer Massi.

The ruling comes after a tough end to the season for the 27-year-old Neymar, who is also mired in legal tussles in Spain. Neymar – whose PSG season fizzled out after a shock Champions League exit to Manchester United – is facing a tax probe in Spain over bonuses he earned at Barcelona as well as his world-record transfer to Paris. The Catalan giants are also suing Neymar for breach of contract after he transferred for a record 222m euros (\$249m) in 2017, less than a year after he signed a new five-year deal.

FOCUS

The people of Al Wakrah are joyous, says Ali Yousef

Ali Yousef, affectionately known in the local area as 'Mr Al Wakrah', has been associated with the neighbourhood and its local football team across six decades. In an interview ahead of the Amir Cup final taking place at Al Wakrah Stadium tomorrow, he spoke of his pride, excitement and aspirations for the future of his city. Excerpts

Q. You have a long history with Al Wakrah Sports Club, can you begin by describing your memories from the early days and how it compares with today?

When I first started with Al Wakrah Sports Club, I was a reserve team player. Then I shifted into the management and administration side of things. During that time, I held a number of positions at the club – most notably as the club's secretary general for a long period of time. I grew with the club. I remember the days when the club was run from old villas and mud houses, and how we used to clear rocks and stones to make the pitches suitable for players to play on. To think back to those days and look where we are today, it's almost unbelievable. Today, Al Wakrah has superb facilities – not just for football, but also athletics, volleyball, basketball, handball and even table tennis.

Q. Al Wakrah will become a prominent city and a prominent part of Qatar 2022. How much does it mean

to the city that in three-and-half years' time the whole world will be watching?

The people of Al Wakrah are joyous – the excitement is unmistakable. This is the global sporting event that every country in the world dreams of hosting. Our wise leaders hit the bullseye when they placed every effort in bidding towards the opportunity to host the World Cup in 2022. This is an accomplishment that we as Qataris wholeheartedly take pride in.

Q. And what does hosting the World Cup mean for the wider Arab world?

As our Amir, His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, said: "This is a World Cup for the Arab world". His words are immortal. His words should be noted down in history, and should be engraved. We take these words as a cradle to live by. We welcome everyone, our friends and brothers from across the world. Qatar is a home to all. The World Cup on Al Wakrah's turf – it's fantastic.

Q. Can you remember your emotions when Qatar won the bid to host the FIFA World Cup in 2022 and what are your hopes for the tournament?

I can't begin to explain the happiness we felt as a nation. I have witnessed the World Cup closely in various countries and this is an occasion everyone wants to be part of. Qatar has provided all that is necessary to fulfil the successful



delivery of this mega-sporting event. Qatar is bringing a new meaning to this football event and changing the face of this globally-loved sport.

This is something that Qatar has al-

ways aspired to do. This was also witnessed when we hosted the fourth Gulf Cup – that was an event that many continue to talk positively about today, from a managerial, planning, techni-

cal and artistic perspective, audience management, and media presence and coverage. Qatar has strained no effort in building the exquisite stadiums from the ground up. I have no doubt that Qa-

tar will host a successful tournament in 2022. And those watching through their screens will also be able to witness the magnitude of the preparations. Not to boast, but those that host the next World Cup will have big shoes to fill.

Q. Do you remember where you were at the time of the announcement? Were you with your family and friends?

I was at home with the family and tears of joy streamed from our eyes. We? Qatar? A state of our size and our population; but with perseverance, great heart and wisdom – we were able to beat a number of leading nations in earning the opportunity to host the World Cup. It was a very happy moment for all members of my family and for all those watching the celebrations.

Q. On 16 May, the new Al Wakrah Stadium will host the Amir Cup final. Can you predict how you will feel?

I'm certain I will feel great pride and joy. This is the real launch and the real face of what Qatar has promised to deliver, with global standards and features, such as the cooling technology, allowing the country to host any sporting event – or any event for that matter – at any time of year.

I believe the mini World Cup – the Amir Cup final – will witness this event and know that Qatar has all that it takes to host the FIFA World Cup. The one that Qatar promised. The promise we, as a nation, are now delivering on.

NBA

Lillard, Trail Blazers aim to give champs Warriors a battle

'Dame has a chip on his shoulder. Has since the day he walked into this league. He play like a guy from Oakland, with a chip on his shoulder. A guy who's been doubted forever'



Portland Trail Blazers guard Damian Lillard (left) celebrates after their win over the Denver Nuggets in the second round of the 2019 NBA Playoffs at Pepsi Center. **PICTURE:** USA TODAY Sports

AFP
Los Angeles

Damian Lillard hopes to close down his hometown arena on his own terms when the Portland Trail Blazers take on the two-time defending champion Golden State Warriors in the Western Conference finals, a best-of-seven series that tips off Tuesday night in Oakland, California.

Lillard, who is rapidly ascending the list of most accomplished Oakland High graduates that currently boasts of David Carradine, Jackie Jensen, Jack London and Bill Rigney, bombed in a game-winning 3-pointer on what many believed would be his final shot at Oracle Arena in a one-point overtime

win in December. It was part of a 113-point, four-game season series the Oakland native had against the Warriors, the most points scored against Golden State in the regular season.

But now, perhaps fittingly, he must return in a postseason series that will be the last for the Warriors in Oakland should they fail to advance to their fifth straight NBA finals. Golden State will move into the Chase Center in San Francisco next season.

"He can score the ball with the best of them," Warriors forward Draymond Green gushed of Lillard earlier in the postseason. "Dame has a chip on his shoulder. Has since the day he walked into this league. He play like a guy from Oakland, with a chip on his shoulder. A guy who's been doubted forever."

Lillard and CJ McCollum, hero of Sunday's Game 7 win at Denver that propelled the Trail Blazers into their first Western finals since 2000, will go head-to-head with Stephen Curry and Klay Thompson in the marquee matchup of the series.

Unless there's a clear winner in the duel of two of the NBA's premier backcourts, the series could turn into a battle of attrition in the front court, where five key players have different degrees of injuries.

The only certainty among the five is that Portland centre Jusuf Nurkic, who suffered a broken leg in March, won't play in the series. He contributed double-doubles to two Portland wins over Golden State this season, and added a third in a December loss.

Meanwhile, Nurkic's counter-

part, DeMarcus Cousins, has expressed a desire to return from a torn quad at some point in the series for Golden State. If Cousins could return and in what capacity loom as two super-sized question marks.

Then there's Kevin Durant (strained calf), Enes Kanter (separated shoulder) and Rodney Hood (hyperextended knee). Durant already has been ruled out of Game 1, but the Warriors' star will be re-evaluated Thursday, while Portland's Kanter and Hood are expected to continue to play, but probably not at 100 percent.

Hood is the biggest uncertainty. He had an MRI exam on his left knee on Monday. It was negative, which is exactly what the super sub had been expecting to hear after a postgame exam on Sunday.

"They checked my knee and everything is stable. Major relief," Hood told reporters after the game. "Hopefully the pain goes down. Hopefully it's feeling better by Tuesday. I'm going to try to shoot for Tuesday, if possible."

The teams split four games in the regular season, including a two-game, playoff-type, home-and-home series in December that began with Lillard's heroics in Oakland. Two nights later, the Warriors went to Portland and extracted a measure of revenge, with Thompson (32), Curry (25) and Durant (25) combining for 82 points in a 115-105 win.

The teams have met twice in the playoffs in the last three seasons, with Golden State prevailing 4-1 in the Western semifinals in 2016 and 4-0 in the first round in 2017.

FOCUS

Judge suppresses video in Kraft's solicitation case

AFP
Los Angeles

A judge on Monday granted Robert Kraft's motion to suppress video evidence, delivering the New England Patriots owner a huge victory - and potentially derailing the prosecution's case - as he combats charges of soliciting a prostitute at a Jupiter, Florida, massage parlour.

Palm Beach County Judge Leonard Hanser sided with the defense's contention that the warrant that allowed recording devices into the spa, and the methods detectives used to obtain video, did not sufficiently protect the privacy and identity of innocent people in the surveillance videos.

"The Court finds that the search warrant does not contain required minimization guidelines, and the minimization techniques employed in this case did not satisfy constitutional requirements ... (thus) all evidence against the Defendant obtained through and connection with the search warrant is suppressed," Hanser wrote in his ruling.

Hanser added that the police's stop of Kraft's car on Jan. 19 constituted an unlawful search and thus all information obtained from that search is also suppressed.

While the state could appeal the ruling, the suppression could effectively end the state's case. Last week, Hanser set a May 21 date for a mandatory appearance for Kraft and his attorneys, at which time a trial would be scheduled. According to reports, however, it is highly unlikely that hearing will happen.

Kraft, 77, visited the Orchids of Asia Day Spa in Jupiter on Jan. 19 and 20, during which time prosecutors claim Kraft paid for and received sex acts at the spa.

A different judge in April issued a temporary protective order to prevent the public release of the videos, with Kraft's attorneys arguing release of the videos would result in "catastrophic" harm for Kraft and that "the public's interest in seeing this video is all about prurient interest."

When Kraft was first charged with first-degree solicitation of a prostitute in February, the NFL released a statement that Kraft would be subject to the league's personal-conduct policy, and that the NFL would monitor the investigation and let the legal process play out before taking any potential action.

A's get approval to pursue new stadium

The Oakland Athletics have received permission to begin the lengthy process of building a new stadium. The Port of Oakland commissioners voted on Monday night to give the team four years to prepare an environmental impact report for the potential building site at Howard Terminal. The A's want to build a quaint 35,000-seat stadium along the bay that would include a housing and retail development near the city's historic Jack London Square. The site is about six miles from the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum, the cavernous stadium opened in 1966 that is also currently home to the Oakland Raiders. It is the only remaining stadium in the United States to serve as the home of both an MLB and NFL franchise. The Raiders are scheduled to move to Las Vegas in 2020. The team still needs to secure the land and receive state and City Council approval. "We are grateful to the Board of Port Commissioners," said team president Dave Kaval, who is hopeful the new ballpark could open by the 2023 season. "In November, we announced our vision to build a waterfront ballpark and provide a baseball experience for our fans like no other."

A stadium at Howard Terminal has met with opposition from workers and businesses near the Port of Oakland, who contend a stadium there will harm the city's industrial economy. Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf, however, supports the site as the home of a future ballpark, saying it's possible to have a top stadium and seaport.

MLB

Ohtani hits 1st home run as Angels top Twins

Reuters
Los Angeles

Tommy La Stella went 3-for-5, hitting what proved to be the game-winning home run in the sixth inning, and Shohei Ohtani hit his first home run of the season to lead the Los Angeles Angels to a 5-4 victory over the Minnesota Twins on Monday night in Minneapolis.

La Stella broke a 4-4 tie with his team-leading 10th homer of the season into the left field bleachers, becoming the first Angels' left-handed batter since Mo Vaughn in 1999 to hit 10 home runs in his first 36 games of a season.

Mike Trout and Albert Pujols both went 3-for-5, Ohtani went 2-for-3 with two walks and two RBIs, and Kole Calhoun added two hits for Los Angeles, which won for the fifth time in seven games.

Tyler Skaggs (4-3) picked up the win, allowing four runs on five hits over five innings. Hansel Robles pitched a perfect ninth to notch his fourth save. Jorge Polanco and Marwin Gonzalez each homered for Minnesota, which has lost back-to-back games for just the third time this season.

Jose Berrios (6-2), who had won a career-best five consecutive starts, took the loss, failing to go six innings for the first time in 10 starts, dating back to last season.

Berrios allowed a career-worst 12 hits and

RESULTS

Mariners	6-5	Oakland
Angels	5-4	Twins
D'backs	9-3	Pirates
Astros	8-1	Tigers
Phillies	7-4	Brewers
White Sox	5-2	Indians

five runs over 5 2/3 innings. He walked three and struck out three.

The Twins took a 2-0 lead in the first when Mitch Garver led off with a walk and then scored on Polanco's eighth home run of the season, a 401-foot drive into the second deck in left field.

The Angels rebounded to take a 3-2 lead in the third when they sent eight men to the plate. La Stella opened the inning with a single and then scored on a single by Trout that bounced past Gonzalez and rolled into the right field corner for a two-base error.

Ohtani then followed with a 429-foot homer off the facing of the second deck above the bullpen in left-center. Los Angeles extended its lead to 4-2 in the fifth when Andrelton Simmons led off with a single, stole second and then scored on a single by Pujols. The Twins tied it in the bottom half of the inning on a two-run homer by Gonzalez into the second deck in left-center, his fourth of the season.

La Stella, who entered the season with 10 career home runs in 947 plate appearances, then put the Angels back in front for good in the sixth with his home run.

MARINERS RALLY PAST A'S

Omar Narvaez drilled the game-winning single to left field with two outs in the bottom of the 10th inning as the host Seattle Mariners scored twice in the frame to rally to a 6-5 victory over the Oakland Athletics on Monday night.

Seattle was one strike away from losing when Domingo Santana tied it up by lacing a 2-2 fastball from Oakland right-hander Joakim Soria (1-3) down the left field line for a double. The ball landed about one foot fair, and pinch runner Dee Gordon easily scored the tying run from second base.

Narvaez followed with the winning hit, and Santana easily scored as the throw from Athletics left fielder Robbie Grossman was off the mark. The Mariners halted a four-game losing streak and won for just the third time in 15 games. Ramon Laureano homered with two outs in the top of the 10th inning to give Oakland a 5-4 lead. Laureano's blast off Seattle right-hander Brandon Brennan (2-2) was the Athletics' fifth solo homer of the night. The centre fielder hit a 1-2 changeup over the fence in left. Khris Davis ended a 20-game homerless stretch by hitting two blasts. Mark Canha and Matt Olson also homered for Oakland.



Los Angeles Angels designated hitter Shohei Ohtani hits a two-run home run in the third inning against the Minnesota Twins at Target Field. **PICTURE:** USA TODAY Sports

CYCLING

Dumoulin the big loser in Giro d'Italia mass fall

Movistar's Richard Carapaz wins stage four, Primoz Roglic of Slovenia consolidates lead



Overall leader and Pink Jersey holder Team Jumbo rider Slovenia's Primoz Roglic celebrates on the podium after the fourth stage of the 102nd Giro d'Italia yesterday. (AFP)

Reuters
Frascati, Italy

Movistar's Giro d'Italia contender Richard Carapaz won stage four yesterday as a mass fall in the peloton seven kilometres from the finish cost 2017 champion Tom Dumoulin a devastating four minutes in the overall standings.

Dumoulin came second at both the Giro d'Italia and the Tour de France in 2018, as well as winning the 2017 Giro and the 2017 world championships time-trial, making him a chief contender in all major tours and races.

"For sure, the overall ranking is over for me," said Dumoulin, who is now in 56th position 4min 30sec behind race leader Primoz Roglic of Slovenia.

The fall saw a small group of eleven riders get away from the peloton, including overall leader Roglic and two of his chief contenders to win the Giro, Britain's Simon Yates and Astana's Miguel

Angel Lopez. Ecuador's Carapaz made a long-range sprint for the line from more than 600 metres out with only Australia's Caleb Ewan and UAE's Diego Ulissi capable of challenging and ending second and third respectively.

Roglic, a former ski jumper, finished two seconds behind the trio, gaining 16 seconds on all his chief rivals for the 2019 title. Dutchman Dumoulin free-wheeled most of the way to the finishing post after his fall with blood streaming from a knee, with his chances of winning the title in tatters. The 28-year-old was then whisked away to hospital for x-rays as he was unable to bend his knee.

"I was leading the peloton so I simply could not avoid it," continued Dumoulin.

"There is no fracture, which is good news, but my knee is very swollen.

"I was not able to develop power in the last few kilometres, so I don't know how I'll be tomorrow (Wednesday), for sure, the overall ranking is over for me."

Sunweb sports director Michiel Elijzen admitted Dumoulin's chances had been massively compromised.

"It looks like it's over for the GC," he said referring to the overall standings.

"It's hard. We came here to win the Giro but after four stages if you are four minutes off the leader..."

"We just have to wait and see if he can continue in the Giro," he said.

Tour of Spain winner Yates was also caught up in a second crash, on a roundabout with around six kilometres to go.

The 26-year-old remounted and chased hard, limiting the damage to just 16sec behind Roglic, who was the only rider to avoid the carnage. "Everyone was fighting for position on a roundabout and a rider slid out in front of me," said Yates.

"I've hit my knee and hip, just on the left hand side, but I'm OK. We'll see how I pull up tomorrow, it's always worse in the morning, but the Giro is long."

Carapaz last year became the first Ecuadorian winner of a Giro stage, going on to take overall fourth place and just missing out on the best young rider's white jersey.

One year on, Carapaz has hit form at the right time despite losing more than a minute because of mechanical problems in Monday's stage.

"I lost time yesterday, so I wanted to make some up," said Carapaz, 26, who was born high in the Andes at 3,000 metres altitude.

"I was a little angry about it, but I didn't expect to win today. Our plan was just to protect Mikel Landa so as not to lose time, but the crash at the end changed everything."

"I was up against sprinters for the stage win so I had to anticipate their action."

"I picked the perfect moment to attack, I knew if I went off with 600 metres to go I could hold on until the line." Today's fifth stage is a short 140km run from Frascati, just south of Rome, to Terracina where a 1.5km home straight should provide a perfect platform for a spectacular sprint finish.

RESULTS AFTER FOURTH STAGE STAGE

1. Richard Carapaz (ECU/Movistar) 5hr 58min 17sec. 2. Caleb Ewan (AUS/LOT) s.t. 3. Diego Ulissi (ITA/UAE) s.t. 4. Pascal Ackermann (GER/BOR) at 02sec. 5. Florian Senechal (FRA/DEC) 02. 6. Primoz Roglic (SLO/JUM) 02. 7. Valerio Conti (ITA/UAE) 14. 8. Miguel Angel Lopez (COL/AST) 18. 9. Arnaud Demare (FRA/FDJ) 18. 10. Simon Yates (GBR/MIT) 18. 11. Rafal Majka (POL/BOR) 18. 12. Bauke Mollema (NED/TRE) 18. 13. Davide Formolo (ITA/BOR) 18. 14. Tony Gallopin (FRA/ALM) 18. 15. Vincenzo Nibali (ITA/BAH) 18. 16. Bob Jungels (LUX/DEC) 18.

OVERALL

1. Primoz Roglic (SLO/Jumbo) 16hr 19min 20sec. 2. Simon Yates (GBR/MIT) at 35sec. 3. Vincenzo Nibali (ITA/BAH) 39. 4. Miguel Angel Lopez (COL/AST) 44. 5. Diego Ulissi (ITA/UAE) 44. 6. Rafal Majka (POL/BOR) 49. 7. Bauke Mollema (NED/TRE) 55. 8. Damiano Caruso (ITA/BAH) 56. 9. Bob Jungels (LUX/DEC) 1:02. 10. Davide Formolo (ITA/BOR) 1:06.

Robert Bortuzzo of the St Louis Blues (left) celebrates his goal against the San Jose Sharks with Robert Thomas in game two of the Western Conference final during the 2019 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs at SAP Center on Monday in San Jose. (AFP)

just a rush of emotion." Despite the unexpectedness of Bortuzzo as a scoring hero, Blues goalie Jordan Binnington noted the goal was "pretty smooth".

"Clearly he's got it in his arsenal," Binnington said.

Jaden Schwartz, Vince Dunn and Oskar Sundqvist scored, and Binnington made 24 saves for the Blues, who improved to 6-2 on the road in the playoffs and will try to get ahead in the best-of-seven Western Conference finals when they host game three today.

The winner of the series will face either the Boston Bruins or Carolina Hurricanes in the Stanley Cup finals.

Martin Jones made 21 saves for the Sharks, whose game-two jinx struck again. It was San Jose's third straight game two defeat after they had won the first game of a series in this post-season.

Couture tied the game 2-2 at 6:54 of the second after he took an outlet pass from Timo Meier and scored with a wrist shot from the left face-off circle.

Couture had scored unas-

isted on a shorthanded breakaway at 4:55 to get the Sharks to within 2-1.

"I thought Logan Couture was pretty good, a couple other guys," Sharks coach Peter DeBoer said. "But it's tough to win this time of year if you don't have everybody going, and I thought they got contributions from everybody like we did (in game one)."

"So we've been here before, and we know how to handle this," DeBoer added.

Schwartz had put St. Louis up 1-0 2:34 into the contest, scoring from the slot with a wrist shot over Jones's glove.

Dunn fired a wrist shot through traffic at 4:16 of the second to make it 2-0.

Sundqvist capped the scoring at 16:52 of the third for St. Louis.

Robert Bortuzzo of the St Louis Blues (left) celebrates his goal against the San Jose Sharks with Robert Thomas in game two of the Western Conference final during the 2019 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs at SAP Center on Monday in San Jose. (AFP)



MOTORSPORT

Dutch Grand Prix back on F1 calendar after 35 years

Reuters
London

The Dutch Grand Prix will return to the Zandvoort seaside circuit for at least three seasons from 2020 and after a 35-year absence from the calendar, Formula One announced yesterday.

The race is sure to be well attended with Red Bull's Max Verstappen, 21, boasting a huge following as his country's most successful driver and Formula One's youngest ever race winner.

Dutch beer giant Heineken will be the title sponsors and the hosting agreement is with a partnership of SportVibes, TIG Sports and Circuit Zandvoort.

"From the beginning of our tenure in Formula One, we said we wanted to race in new venues, while also respecting the sport's historic roots in Europe," said Formula One chairman Chase Carey in a statement.

"Next season therefore, we will have a brand new street race that will be held in the Vietnamese capital of Hanoi, as well as the return to Zandvoort, after an absence of 35 years.

"We've seen a resurgence of interest in Formula One in Holland, mainly due to the enthusiastic support for the talented Max Verstappen, as seen from the sea of orange at so many races," he added.

Verstappen is third overall in the championship after finishing

third in Sunday's Spanish Grand Prix, with plenty of supporters in attendance.

"It's just an iconic, historic track," he said.

"I have raced there before with F3 and it was a lot of fun. I compare the track a little bit with Suzuka... It's a pretty quick track and it's always good and exciting to have new ones on the calendar."

"It's very cool, and with no run off, it's quite hard to find the limit. On some other tracks it's a bit easier but that also makes it more exciting."

Next year's race will be the 31st time the Dutch Grand Prix has been part of the Formula One World Championship, with Zandvoort making its first appearance on the calendar in a 1952 race won by Ferrari's Alberto Ascari.

The late British world champion Jim Clark won there a record four times.

The last Dutch Grand Prix was in 1985.

"I think a Dutch Grand Prix, with the popularity of Verstappen, is going to be immense. I think that's positive for Formula One," Red Bull boss Christian Horner told reporters at the weekend.

The race deal is the second, after Vietnam, negotiated by U.S.-based Liberty Media since taking over the sport in 2017 and ousting former commercial supremo Bernie Ecclestone.

The French Grand Prix at the southern Le Castellet circuit returned in 2018 after a 10-year absence but that deal was done by Ecclestone.

Trailblazing US fencer Ibtihaj 'unofficially' hangs up sabre

Fencer Ibtihaj Mohamad, who in 2016 became the first American to compete in a hijab at the Olympic Games, is stepping away from the sport.

Mohamad, who won team sabre bronze at the Rio Games, told NBC Sports that a pilgrimage to the Muslim holy city of Mecca had been "transformational" for her, and helped her decide not to pursue a berth at the 2020 Tokyo Games.

"I have unofficially hung up my sabre," she said.

"I feel really confident with my career and where I am right now in my life. You know, fencing is not a big part of it anymore, but it's always been my intention to transcend sport in a way that reaches people not just in the fencing world but outside of it."

"I think I've been able to best do that, not only representing my sport but representing myself."

Mohamad was a trailblazer in Rio, qualifying six months before the Games opened and saying she aimed to explode stereotypes about Muslim women and give Muslim girls that they could get involved

in sport. She was named one of *Time Magazine's* 100 most influential people and in 2017 a Barbie doll fashioned in her image was released.

In 2018, she released her memoir "Proud" and she has continued to speak out about attitudes toward Muslim women and the hijab, arguing that wearing the headscarf is a choice that Muslim women are entitled to make.

She said other athletes, including skier Lindsey Vonn and footballers Abby Wambach and Julie Foudy, had helped her reach her decision.

"It's the hardest decision I've ever made," she said.



SPOTLIGHT

Blues down Sharks 4-2 to level NHL playoff series

AFP
Los Angeles

Robert Bortuzzo scored the go-ahead goal in the second period Monday as the St. Louis Blues beat the San Jose Sharks 4-2 to knot their NHL playoff series at one game apiece.

Bortuzzo's first goal in 31 Stanley Cup playoff appearances gave the Blues a 3-2 lead with a backhand at 16:34 of the second period.

Logan Couture scored twice in space of 1min 59sec earlier in the period to pull the Sharks level at 2-2 in the contest at SAP Center in San Jose.

Bortuzzo, who had scored just two goals for the Blues in the regular season and has never had more than four in any of his eight NHL campaigns, responded, taking a pass from Joel Edmundson and skating in to put a backhand shot into the top corner.

"It's not really my game, but it's definitely something that goes in the back of your mind," Bortuzzo said. "It was

just a rush of emotion." Despite the unexpectedness of Bortuzzo as a scoring hero, Blues goalie Jordan Binnington noted the goal was "pretty smooth".

"Clearly he's got it in his arsenal," Binnington said.

Jaden Schwartz, Vince Dunn and Oskar Sundqvist scored, and Binnington made 24 saves for the Blues, who improved to 6-2 on the road in the playoffs and will try to get ahead in the best-of-seven Western Conference finals when they host game three today.

The winner of the series will face either the Boston Bruins or Carolina Hurricanes in the Stanley Cup finals.

Martin Jones made 21 saves for the Sharks, whose game-two jinx struck again. It was San Jose's third straight game two defeat after they had won the first game of a series in this post-season.

Couture tied the game 2-2 at 6:54 of the second after he took an outlet pass from Timo Meier and scored with a wrist shot from the left face-off circle.

Couture had scored unas-

isted on a shorthanded breakaway at 4:55 to get the Sharks to within 2-1.

"I thought Logan Couture was pretty good, a couple other guys," Sharks coach Peter DeBoer said. "But it's tough to win this time of year if you don't have everybody going, and I thought they got contributions from everybody like we did (in game one)."

"So we've been here before, and we know how to handle this," DeBoer added.

Schwartz had put St. Louis up 1-0 2:34 into the contest, scoring from the slot with a wrist shot over Jones's glove.

Dunn fired a wrist shot through traffic at 4:16 of the second to make it 2-0.

Sundqvist capped the scoring at 16:52 of the third for St. Louis.

Robert Bortuzzo of the St Louis Blues (left) celebrates his goal against the San Jose Sharks with Robert Thomas in game two of the Western Conference final during the 2019 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs at SAP Center on Monday in San Jose. (AFP)

SPOTLIGHT

Tiger trims events to stay fresh but eyes Tokyo Olympics

'I'm sure that I won't have many more opportunities going forward at 43'

AFP
Bethpage, United States

Tiger Woods plans to practice smarter and play less to keep his body fresh, but the 43-year-old golf star might change that strategy to reach the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Sixth-ranked Woods, who snapped an 11-year major drought by winning last month's Masters, seeks his 16th major title at this week's 101st PGA Championship at Bethpage Black.

With the PGA settling into its new May date after moving from August, it's only the sixth time Woods has not played between major starts, admitting Tuesday he wasn't mentally ready to return two weeks ago at Quail Hollow.

"I'm always looking for breaks," Woods said. "I wanted to play at Quail Hollow, but to be honest with you, I wasn't ready yet to start the grind of practising and preparing and logging all those hours again."

Woods, whose 2017 spinal fusion surgery ended years of back injuries, has plenty of motivation this week.

Woods could return to world number one for the first time since March 2013. He would match the all-time US PGA win mark of 82 set by Sam Snead by capturing his fifth Wanamaker Trophy. He would also pull within two of the all-time record of 18 majors won by Jack Nicklaus.

"Coming here is a different story. I was able to log in the hours, put in the time and feel rested and ready," Woods said.

"That's going to be the interesting part going forward - how much do I play and how much do I rest? I think I've done a lot of the legwork and the hard work already, trying to find my game over the past year and a half. Now it's just maintaining it."

"I feel better when I'm fresh. The body doesn't respond like it used to, doesn't bounce back quite as well, so I've got to be aware of that."

Woods, who will play only nine-hole practice rounds Monday and Wednesday, also says the chance to play in next year's Olympics is enticing even if it might make him play more events next season to secure a spot.

"Would I like to play in the Olympics? Yes, I've never played in the Olympics, and I'm sure that I won't have many more opportunities going forward at 43," Woods said.

"That would be a first for me and something that I would certainly welcome if I was part



Tiger Woods practices at the range for the PGA Championship golf tournament at Bethpage State Park yesterday. (USA TODAY Sports)

Tiger sad over drink driving death at heart of lawsuit

Tiger Woods expressed sadness yesterday for the death of a staffer at his Florida restaurant whose parents have filed a lawsuit against the golf star, his girlfriend and the business. The parents of Nicholas Immesberger, who died in a drink driving accident last December at age 24, filed the lawsuit saying their son had been overserved alcohol at The Woods in Jupiter, Florida, celebrity website TMZ reported Monday. Immesberger was a bartender at The Woods and knew the golf star personally, according to the report.

Woods expressed his sorrow over Immesberger's death in response to a question about the lawsuit at a news conference ahead of the 101st PGA Championship, the year's second major golf tournament which starts Thursday at Bethpage Black on Long Island in New York.

"We're all very sad that Nick passed away," Woods said. "It was a terrible night, a terrible ending. We feel bad for him and his entire family. It's very sad."

Woods snapped an 11-year major win drought by winning the Masters last month and seeks his 16th career major title this week. He was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom last week at a White House ceremony.

The restaurant's manager is Erica Herman, who is Woods's girlfriend and, according to TMZ, recruited Immesberger to the restaurant. Immesberger finished his shift on December 10 but stayed at The Woods to drink at the restaurant and was allegedly served to the point of "severe intoxication" before being sent out to his car, according to the report.

Immesberger lost control of his car that evening while driving home and crashed, dying in the accident, according to the report, which also said Immesberger had a blood alcohol level of .256, more than three times the legal limit. The family claims Woods and Herman knew Immesberger had a habitual problem with alcohol but allowed him to be served anyway.

The lawsuit alleges Woods and Herman had been drinking with Immesberger just days before the crash and "reasonably should have known" he was a "habitual drunkard", according to TMZ. Immesberger's parents sued Woods directly claiming he "was directly responsible for ensuring that his employees and management... were not over serving its employees/customers", according to the report.

The lawsuit was filed in Palm Beach County, Florida. It seeks more than \$15,000.

of the team. Getting there and making the team is going to be the tough part.

"How many events do I play? Do I add a couple more to get in. These are all questions that will be answered going forward."

"I just know that if I play well

in the big events like I did this year, things will take care of themselves."

Woods has adjusted his workout regimen to his older, repaired body. "I end up spending a lot of time on my short game, a lot of time on pitching,

putting and wedging," he said. "I can swing a longer club easier and just make sure I have the feel and save it for game time."

Woods spoke with former Super Bowl champion NFL quarterback Peyton Manning about coming back from neck

surgery last year. "Just because someone doesn't have the strength to do something, he's going to figure out a different way," Woods said.

"He has to do more work in the film room. I had to do more work on managing my game, my body, understanding it, what I can and cannot do -- and more than anything, trying to figure out how to be explosive day in and day out."

That's tough when Woods never knows how his back will feel any given day.

"Some days I have more range of motion. Some days I don't. Some days I ache more and sometimes I don't," Woods said. "There are more days I feel older than my age than I do younger."

"Being a little bit older and with the back the way it is, there are a lot of concerns."

Woods says he's not looking to return to his dominating form of old, but to make him old form more dominating.

"Whether I'm dominant or not going forward, that remains to be seen," Woods said.

"I need to give myself the best chance to win the events I play in. And sometimes that can be taking a little bit more breaks, making sure I'm ready and able to give it my best at those events."

FOCUS

Glover draws on memories of beating Tiger at rainy Bethpage

AFP
Bethpage, United States

Unheralded US golfer Lucas Glover held off late charges by Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson to win a US Open title 10 years ago at rain-softened Bethpage Black.

Now Glover is back, heavy rains have returned, Woods is on form again after winning last month's Masters and another major title is on offer at Bethpage Black in this week's PGA Championship.

"That might be the only thing that anybody will ever use he and I's name in the same breath, but any time you're lumped in with him, it's a pretty big honour," Glover said Monday.

Glover held off Woods, who shared sixth after a 2002 US Open win at Bethpage, and Phil Mickelson, who shared second, to win the 2009 US Open, the swamped Long Island public course barely made playable for a Monday finish.

"It would be naive to sit up here and say I didn't think he and Phil and those guys were going to make a run," Glover said. "I knew it was coming. The biggest thing for me was I executed under the gun with all that going on, knowing they were coming, and I held them off. It might not have been the prettiest, but it was when it had to be."

While Woods battled knee and back injuries for most of the past decade, ending an 11-year major win drought last month at Augusta National, Glover struggled to keep his spot on the US PGA Tour, his lone win since Bethpage coming in 2011 at Quail Hollow.

"I don't think there's been anybody to play this game that hasn't been fried at one point or another," Glover said, citing family issues and a knee injury as reasons why his game has suf-

fered. "The way I'm looking at the last few years is I've come out the other side. I haven't won, I haven't accomplished any of my goals, but I've come through it," he said. "The things you learn in the hard times make the good times better."

Seeing Woods make his comeback had Glover crying, knowing how hard a fightback can be.

"I got a little teary-eyed, I'll be honest," Glover said.

"I know what it meant to him just from reading it. I want my kids to see the Tiger that's a winner and that was pretty special. Pretty good for him, pretty good for his family, and amazing for golf."

Glover's fourth-place showing in March at the Honda Classic was his own hopeful sign and his best showing this season.

"That was like a big moment," he said. "I made two putts on the last couple holes, and to me right then that was a big thing because it tied me for the lead, and I hadn't done that in a long, long time."

EXECUTING UNDER PRESSURE

And Glover hasn't forgotten the feeling out duelling Woods and Mickelson a decade ago.

"I'm in every way a different person than 10 years ago, but I can still lean on all of that," Glover said.

"Biggest thing I took from that personally was executing under that pressure. I was able to do that, and that was the best feeling after."

Glover, ranked 83rd in the world, sees soft greens as an edge for shotmakers once they find the fairway.

"With it soft like this, it will be a lot of advantage if you're striking your irons well," he said. "The ball just kind of goes where you hit it. You get extra rewarded for a good shot, and a bad shot is kind of still bad. So still fair?"



Lucas Glover of the US holds the trophy after winning the US Open Golf Championship on the Black Course at Bethpage State Park in Farmingdale, New York, on June 22, 2009. (Reuters)

RYDER CUP

European captain Harrington issues Wentworth ultimatum

Reuters
Farmingdale

European Ryder Cup captain Padraig Harrington has issued an ultimatum to anyone hoping to be a wildcard pick on next year's team - turn up and play at Wentworth the week before or forget about being on the Sunday night flight to Whistling Straits.

Harrington wants his prospective picks for the 2020 edition to show some hunger, not to mention form, at the tour's flagship BMW PGA Championship in Surrey.

"Nobody has an excuse not to turn up," the Irishman said yesterday, two days before the opening round of the PGA Championship at Bethpage Black.

"They can't say they're playing another event or they're somewhere else... or want to rest.

"If you want a pick you're going to have to turn up and play a big tournament with the other players who are interested in that pick, so I can make a difficult decision as late as a week before (the Ryder Cup)."

Harrington announced recently that he would reduce the number of wildcard picks from four to three players.

He argued that the number nine on the qualifying list is usually selected anyway, but is likely to feel more comfortable if he has qualified automatically rather than being reliant on a captain's pick. Not that any of the captain's picks last year - Spaniard Sergio Garcia, Swede Henrik Stenson and Englishmen Paul Casey and Ian Poulter - appeared ill at ease at Le Golf National, where Europe continued its two-decade long home dominance with a seven-point drubbing of the United States.

The biennial team event will

be played next year from Sept. 25-27 at the Whistling Straits course that hugs Lake Michigan in Wisconsin.

Harrington also feels strongly that to be eligible for Ryder Cup selection a player has to be a European Tour member in the two years preceding the event.

The issue had become a talking point because European four-times major winner Rory McIlroy indicated late last year that he might let his membership lapse in 2019 to focus on the PGA Tour in the US. McIlroy, however, diffused the issue recently by confirming he would remain a tour member this year after all.

"It is nice that he has taken membership to put it down on paper and make things a little simpler and less complicated," Harrington said.

"I would be on the side of making the players jump through a few more hoops to be on the Ryder Cup team."



Padraig Harrington of Ireland during a press conference prior to the 2019 PGA Championship at the Bethpage Black course in Bethpage, New York, yesterday. (AFP)

TENNIS

Zverev clay-court horror show continues

Eight-time Rome winner Nadal will start his tournament against Chardy in the second round

AFP
Rome

Germany's Alexander Zverev crashed out of the Italian Open yesterday with a 7-5, 7-5 loss to Italian wild card Matteo Berrettini in the second round.

"The match that I played was horrendous," said Zverev after the game which took 1hr 48min on the red clay of the Foro Italico. Zverev, the 2017 winner and runner-up in Rome last year to Novak Djokovic, has had a terrible start to the clay-court season with the French Open starting on May 26. The 22-year-old lost his Madrid Open title last week, falling in the quarter-finals of both Madrid and Munich to Stefanos Tsitsipas and Cristian Garin respectively.

The German has yet to win a trophy this season and stands 4-6 on clay this spring. Zverev had been seeded fourth in the final clay-court warm-up before Roland Garros, and was playing his first game having received a first-round bye.

Last year, Zverev reached the final in Rome beating Berrettini there in their only previous meeting. But the 33rd-ranked Italian has been on form capturing his second ATP title on clay in Budapest last month, and reached the final in Munich.

Zverev started with a break in the second set, but lost this advantage immediately. The 33rd-ranked Italian survived four break points, breaking the German in the twelfth game to close 7-5 to the delight of the home crowd. Berrettini will play Argentine Diego Schwartzman, who eased past Yoshihito Nishioka 6-1, 6-4 in 73 minutes.

Belgian David Goffin rallied from a set down to beat former French Open champion Stan Wawrinka in three sets and advance to the second round. The 28-year-old Goffin won through 4-6, 6-0, 6-2 in 1hr 55min against the three-time Grand Slam winner to set up a meeting with Argentine seventh seed Juan Martin Del Potro for a place in the third round.

Ninth seed Marin Cilic beat Italian wild card Andrea Basso 6-1, 7-5 as Australian Nick Kyrgios needed three sets to get past Russian 12th seed Daniil Medvedev. "I knew it was going to be tough today because I haven't played much on clay," said Kyrgios, who next



Italy's Matteo Berrettini plays a backhand during his win over Germany's Alexander Zverev at the Italian Open in Rome yesterday. (AFP)

plays Norwegian qualifier Casper Ruud.

Portugal's Joao Sousa saved four match points in the deciding set to battle past American Frances Tiafoe 6-3, 6-7 (3/7), 7-6 (7/4). Sousa, who also trailed 1/4 in the deciding set tie-break, will play third seed Roger Federer in the second round.

Eight-time Rome winner Rafael Nadal will start his tournament against Jeremy Chardy in the second round after the Frenchman beat compatriot Richard

Gasquet 6-1, 4-6, 6-3 in a match suspended overnight on Monday.

Also yesterday, former world number one Caroline Wozniacki retired from her match against Danielle Collins over a left-leg injury after she earlier lost a first-set tiebreaker to her American opponent.

Wozniacki took a timeout when 5-2 down to receive treatment but eschewed further play after she lost the tiebreaker. It was another early exit for Wozniacki,

who also retired at the Madrid Open.

FIRST ROUND RESULTS (X DENOTES SEEDING):

Women: Julia Goerges (GER x16) bt Su-Wei Hsieh (TPE) 6-3, 6-4; Alize Cornet (FRA) bt Aryna Sabalenka (BLR x9) 6-1, 6-4; Carla Suárez (ESP) bt Dayana Yastremska (UKR) 6-4, 1-6, 6-3; Darya Kasatkina (RUS) bt Irina Begu (ROU) 6-2, 7-6 (7/5); Danielle Collins (USA) bt Caro-

line Wozniacki (DEN x11) 7-6 (7/5), 0-0 retired; Maria Sakkari (GRE) bt Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (RUS) 6-1, 7-5

Men: Nick Kyrgios (AUS) bt Daniil Medvedev (RUS x12) 6-3, 3-6, 6-3; David Goffin (BEL) bt Stanislas Wawrinka (SUI) 4-6, 6-0, 6-2; Diego Schwartzman (ARG) bt Yoshihito Nishioka (JPN) 6-1, 6-4; Taylor Fritz (USA) bt Guido Pella (ARG) 6-3, 6-4; Radu Albot (MDA) bt Benoit Paire (FRA) 6-3, 6-2; Jeremy Chardy (FRA) bt Richard Gasquet (FRA) 6-1, 4-6, 6-3.

Serena out of Italian Open with knee problem

Rome: Serena Williams withdrew from the Italian Open yesterday with a recurring left knee injury handing sister Venus a walkover into the third round. In a statement the 23-time Grand Slam winner insisted she would still be competing in the French Open later this month.

"I must withdraw from the Italian Open due to pain in my left knee," Serena said in a statement. "I will miss the fans and competition at one of my favourite tournaments. I'll be concentrating on rehab and look forward to seeing you all at the French Open and next year in Rome."

The French Open starts on May 26. Serena's withdrawal comes a day after she beat Sweden's Rebecca Peterson in straight sets to set up a second round meeting with her older sister Venus. She had been returning after more than two months out with a knee problem, in the final warm-up clay-court tournament before the French Open.

Four-time Rome winner Serena, 37, had eased through 6-4, 6-2 her first round match against Swedish qualifier Peterson. Serena had also played Petersen in the second round at the Miami Open in March before withdrawing with a knee injury.

Her withdrawal sends Venus Williams, the 1999 winner, through to a third round meeting with either Johanna Konta of Britain or American seventh seed Sloane Stephens. Serena - now ranked 11th - has completed just eight matches this year, also withdrawing from Indian Wells in March with illness.

There are now doubts that the veteran can add to her tally of Grand Slams, something which has so far proved beyond her since returning last year after taking time out following the birth of her first child.

Her last Grand Slam singles title was won at the Australian Open in 2017, where she was pregnant, breaking a tie with Steffi Graf for the most in the professional era.

Her win in Melbourne moved her one behind Australian Court's record of 24 major singles titles. She is a three-time French Open winner, claiming her last title in Roland Garros in 2015.

FOCUS

QWSC win Ramadan football tournament



QWSC emerged victorious in the men's football tournament held as part of the Aspire Ramadan Sports Festival at the Aspire Zone Foundation (AZF). QWSC beat Delta 1-0. Al Janin Camp took the second place after beating Baladna with a final score of 11-4.

The winners were awarded their medals and cups by the chairman of the organising committee of the festival Abdullah Aman al-Khater. The men's Basketball Competition kicked off on Monday with four matches. It is scheduled to continue until the 17th of May with the participation of 12 teams. From

yesterday, the Ladies Sports Hall will host the three-day Women's Basketball competition with the participation of 8 registered teams.

This year, the Ramadan Sports Festival is sponsored by Saleh Al Hamad Al Mana Co, Aseel Water and EsQatar Sports.

SPOTLIGHT

Open house and auction of Arabian horses at Al Shaqab

Al Shaqab, a member of Qatar Foundation, and Al Rayyan Stud will hold an Open house and auction of exquisite Arabian and Peninsula horses this weekend at Al Shaqab. The Open House is scheduled to take place in Al Shaqab's Indoor Arena, situated within the Equine Education Department, starting at 9pm on Friday, May 17. It will provide an opportunity for horse lovers and horse owners to observe and appraise the foals and mares that will be in the auction, which will take place at 9pm on Saturday, May 18 at the same venue.

The horses will be progenies of the prestigious stallions and mares which are bred through the successful breeding program being implemented by Al Shaqab. Twenty-one horses, most of them belonging to Al Shaqab, will be auctioned.

Over the years, Al Shaqab has bred several prize-winning stallions and mares that have won awards at international shows. The breeding programme includes international Arabian horses, combining all Arabian bloodlines; Peninsula horses, as determined by international breeders' association The Pyramid Society; and the traditional Qatari bloodlines of the past.

Sheikh Hamad bin Ali al-Thani, Manager of the Al Shaqab Breeding & Show Department, said: "In protecting and conserving Qatar's equestrian heritage, Al Shaqab's breeding philosophy

has been to preserve the Arabian breed and to produce horses that are beautiful and athletic, with great moral character and kindness. Seven world champion stallions are key to Al Shaqab's programme and they are among the finest Arabian horses on the planet. These stallions have sired several progenies who have continued to win at some of the most prestigious shows."

Recently, Al Shaqab was triumphant at the Marina di Pietrasanta 2019 Arabian Horse Show in Italy, when four of the six horses won top honours - Ghaliba Al Shaqab, a filly, and Aqil Al Shaqab, a champion colt, won gold medals, while Te Al Shaqab and Thamamah Al Shaqab, won silver.



Al Shaqab has bred several prize-winning stallions and mares that have won awards at international shows.

FOOTBALL

Qatar Olympic team to train in France

QNA
Doha

The Qatar Olympic football team will train in France from May 20 until the end of the month as part of preparations for the Toulon International tournament in France. The team's partici-

pation in the Toulon tournament, is part of the preparation for the Under-23 Asian Cup, which will take place in Thailand in January 2020, which is also a qualifying tournament for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

The Toulon tournament will run from June 1 to 15. Qatar Olympic team was pooled in group B alongside France, Brazil and Guatemala. Qatar will open their campaign against

France on June 2 while the second match will be against Guatemala three days later. The final match will be against Brazil on June 8.

The Toulon International Tournament has been held annually in the city of Toulon in southern France since 1967.

It is also held in other French cities and witnesses the participation of teams from all continents.