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England run Irish ragged to deliver World Cup warning



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Sunday, August 25, 2019 Dhul-Hijja 24, 1440 AH

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Salah scores a brace as Liverpool sink Arsenal
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CRICKET

Root revives England's Ashes hopes in third Test

Skipper's unbeaten 75 keeps the hosts in the hunt; England need 203 runs more for a win with seven wickets in hand

AFP
Leeds, United Kingdom

England captain Joe Root restored a measure of batting pride for his side with an unbeaten 75 in the third Test at Headingley as Australia were denied an Ashes-clinching win inside three days yesterday.

At stumps, England were 156-3, still needing a further 203 runs to reach a target of 359 made all the more imposing after they had collapsed to a woeful 67 all out in the first innings – their worst Ashes total for 71 years.

Their second innings threatened to go the same way at 15-2.

But Root, out for ducks in his previous two knocks, was still there at the close after a third-wicket stand of 126 in 53 overs with Joe Denly (50).

Ben Stokes was two not out from 50 deliveries.

An Australia victory would see the holders retain the Ashes at 2-0 up with two to play in a five-match series.

The odds were still in their favour but England now had an outside shot at a win that would rival their celebrated '500/1' success of 1981 when they beat Australia at Headingley after following-on.

Only three sides, however, have made more than 300 to win in the fourth innings of a Test at Headingley – Australia (404-3 in 1948), England (315-4 against Australia, 2001) and the West Indies with 322-5 two years ago.

No one was consulting that page in the record books, though,



England's Joe Root (left) in action on the third day of the third Test against Australia at Headingley in Leeds, United Kingdom, yesterday. (Reuters)

when England slumped to 15-2 by losing two wickets for no runs in four balls.

Left-hander Rory Burns (seven) edged Pat Cummins to David Warner at first slip before Surrey team-mate Jason Roy, yet to convince as a Test match opener for all his World Cup heroics, was bowled playing down the wrong line to Josh Hazlewood, who took 5-30 in the first innings.

Denly, the only England batsman to reach double figures in the first innings with 12, repeatedly played and missed either side of being hit on the head by a Cummins bouncer but hung on in there.

The more-assured Root covered off-spinner Nathan Lyon, long a thorn in England's side, for four to complete a 120-ball fifty acclaimed by the Yorkshireman's

adoring public.

Root had a brief scare on 59 when given out lbw to Hazlewood but his immediate review revealed a clear edge which had somehow escaped the attention of New Zealand umpire Chris Gaffaney.

Denly's single off Lyon saw him to fifty in 134 balls.

But when Hazlewood defied the increasingly slow pitch by

getting a bouncer to lift, Denly was in no position to hook and gloved the ball to Australia captain and wicketkeeper Tim Paine, with England now 141-3.

LABUSCHAGNE STARS AGAIN

Earlier, Marnus Labuschagne missed out on a maiden Test hundred as he top-scored with 80 in Australia's second-innings 246.

Scorecard

AUSTRALIA 1st innings 179 all out	8-226 (Cummins), 9-237 (Labuschagne), 10-246 (Lyon)
ENGLAND 1st innings 67 all out	
AUSTRALIA 2nd innings (w/n 171/6)	Bowling: Archer 14-2-40-2 (3nb, 1w); Broad 16-2-52-2 (1w); Woakes 10-1-34-1; Leach 11-0-46-1; Stokes 24.2-7-56-3 (4nb)
M. Harris b Leach	19
D. Warner lbw b Broad	0
U. Khawaja c Roy b Woakes	23
M. Labuschagne run out	80
T. Head b Stokes	25
M. Wade c Bairstow b Stokes	33
T. Paine c Denly b Broad	0
J. Pattinson c Root b Archer	20
P. Cummins c Burns b Stokes	6
N. Lyon b Archer	9
J. Hazlewood not out	4
Extras (b5, lb13, nb7, w2) 27	
Total (all out, 75.2 overs) 246	
Fall of wickets: 1-10 (Warner), 2-36 (Harris), 3-52 (Khawaja), 4-97 (Head), 5-163 (Wade), 6-164 (Paine), 7-215 (Pattinson),	
ENGLAND 2nd innings	
R. Burns c Warner b Hazlewood	7
J. Roy b Cummins	8
J. Root not out	75
J. Denly c Paine b Hazlewood	50
B. Stokes not out	2
Extras (b4, lb6, nb1, w3) 14	
Total (3 wks, 72 overs) 156	
Fall of wickets: 1-15 (Burns), 2-15 (Roy), 3-141 (Denly)	
Bowling: Cummins 15-3-33-1 (1nb, 1w); Hazlewood 18-6-35-2; Lyon 21-3-42-0; Pattinson 13-3-23-0 (2w); Labuschagne 5-0-13-0	

It was his third successive fifty since becoming world cricket's inaugural concussion substitute in place of star batsman Steve Smith in the drawn second Test at Lord's.

Australia resumed on 171-6 with Labuschagne 53 not out after making 74 – seven more than England managed between them – in the first innings.

Labuschagne had made 60 when he was dropped for the third time in his innings by diving wicketkeeper Jonny Bairstow when an edge off Stuart Broad appeared to be heading Root's way at first slip.

Labuschagne had moved on to 70 when, as happened with his second ball at Lord's, he was hit on the helmet grille by a Jofra Archer bouncer.

But he was cleared to bat on by Australia's team doctor.

There was now a risk that wickets at the other end might deprive Labuschagne of a hundred but he ran himself out instead.

Ignoring the old rule of 'never run on a misfield' when Denly fumbled at third man, Labuschagne failed to beat a throw to Bairstow as his valuable 187-ball innings came to an end.

ATHLETICS

Lyles aiming for gold at Doha 2019 after 200m win in Paris

AFP
Paris

Noah Lyles stormed to another impressive victory in the 200m at yesterday's Diamond League meet in Paris, firing a warning shot a litter over a month before the IAAF World Championships Doha 2019.

Lyles, who snatched headlines by running a world-leading 19.50 seconds in Lausanne last month to become the fourth fastest of all time over the half-lap race, clocked 19.65sec at a packed Stade Charlety.

It was perfect timing for the 22-year-old American, coming a day after it was reported that US teammate Christian Coleman had missed three drugs tests, leaving the latter starting at a possible ban ahead of the September 28-October 6 world championships in Doha.

"I'm coming off a loaded week in training so that gives me a lot of confidence," Lyles said after the win.

"It felt fast. I blinked and all of a sudden the race was over. I've been putting in some great training sessions but it's always different when you're over here in

Europe, it's like a hiccup to overcome in itself with the travel.

"When I was coming off the turn it felt like such a fast track, the fastest I've ever felt coming off the turn.

"Looking to Doha, it's not about going after (Usain) Bolt's record or anything like that, but when we get there we're willing to go after any record."

Looking to Doha, it's not about going after (Usain) Bolt's record or anything like that, but when we get there we're willing to go after any record.

—Noah Lyles, after winning 200m in Paris

Lyles, who ran 19.78sec to win the 200m at the US championships, started in lane seven in the 12th leg of the Diamond League ahead of finals in Zurich and Brussels on August 29 and September 6 respectively.

The American effortlessly motored away from the field down the stadium's brand-new blue track laid in preparation for next year's European championships.

In balmy conditions with a temperature of 30 degrees Celsius (84F), Turkey's world and Eu-

ropean champion Ramil Guliyev came in second in 20.01sec.

Lyles, who will compete only in the 200m in Doha before attempting a sprint double at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, has been touted, along with Coleman and Michael Norman, as a possible name to help fill the now-retired Usain Bolt's absence from the track.

Should he keep up his form over 200m, Lyles will be a solid challenger to dominate the event in coming years.

The women's 100m was won by Jamaica's Elaine Thompson, the reigning Olympic double sprint champion, in 10.98sec.

There was no Dina Asher-Smith, the in-form Briton instead in action at her home championships. Ivorian Marie-Josée Ta Lou claimed second in 11.13, two-hundredths ahead of Dutch sprinter Dafne Schippers.

"It was a hard race," said Thompson. "It's still five weeks to Doha so it's all preparation at this stage. I'm feeling great and I'm getting in shape step by step, day by day. I'm not at 100 percent yet because it's all about the world championships."

"It's very important to put races like this in because it was a strong field so to get the victory is great."



Noah Lyles (right) of the US in action during the men's 200m at the Diamond League event in Paris, France, yesterday. (Reuters)

SECOND TEST

Latham ton drives Black Caps' reply against Sri Lanka

Tourists were 196 for four at stumps, still trailing Sri Lanka by 48 runs

AFP
Colombo, Sri Lanka

A sparkling century by Tom Latham powered New Zealand's first innings reply after Sri Lanka posted 244 on day three of the rain-hit second Test in Colombo yesterday.

Latham, on 111, put together an unbeaten 70-run stand with BJ Watling, on 25, to thwart the Sri Lankan bowling attack that had made early inroads into the Kiwi batting.

The tourists were 196 for four at stumps, still trailing Sri Lanka by 48 runs.

Earlier Dhananjaya de Silva made 109 to lift Sri Lanka after they resumed the day on 144 for six following their decision to bat first.

But Latham made the day his own as he registered his 10th Test hundred – fourth against Sri Lanka – to hold the New Zealand innings after they lost key wickets including skipper Kane Williamson for 20.

Latham combined the right dose of caution and aggression as he hit 10 boundaries in his 184-ball stay at the wicket so far.

“Tom is getting better and better every season. He had a great summer back home,” New Zealand paceman Tim Southee, who claimed four wickets in the Sri Lanka innings, told reporters. “Great to see him kick on and continue that form overseas especially to come here and play the way he has played on conditions that are tough.”

Off-spinner Dilruwan Perera opened the bowling for Sri Lanka and claimed two wickets, dismissing opener Jeet Raval, for nought, and Henry Nicholls, for 15.

Paceman Suranga Lakmal sent Williamson trudging back to the pavilion after the batsman edged an away-going delivery to be caught at second slip.

Latham and Ross Taylor, who made 23, tried to steady the innings by putting together 50 runs before left-arm spinner Lasith Embuldeniya broke the partnership.

Embuldeniya drew Taylor out of his crease only for the batsman to edge the ball to slip.

Sri Lanka's wicketkeeper Niroshan Dickwella had to leave the field after damaging the little finger of his left hand while attempting a catch off a Kumara delivery.

In the morning session, De Silva moved from his overnight 32 to complete his fifth Test century.



New Zealand's cricketer Tom Latham plays a shot during the third day of the final cricket Test match between Sri Lanka and New Zealand at P. Sara Oval stadium in Colombo yesterday. / AFP / LAKRUWAN WANNIARACHCHI

Southee returned figures of 4-63 while pace partner Trent Boult got three wickets.

De Silva, who was dropped on nine by paceman Boult off his own bowling on day two, put on crucial partnerships including a 43-run stand for the eighth wicket with Suranga Lakmal.

The middle-order batsman, who hit 16 fours and two sixes in his 148-ball stay, reached his century with a boundary to third man off Southee as he raised his bat to the applauding dressing room.

“We were in a bit of a tough situation and the idea was to try and get to 230. Great support from Dilruwan and the lower-order guys to help us to get where we are,” said de Silva.

“Very pleased with the effort I put in today. I have not been able to come up with a big score for quite some time now.”

After the first two days were affected by rain, the third day's play witnessed 90 overs despite a 28 minute delay due to rain in the final session.

Sri Lanka lead the two-match series 1-0.

Scorecard

SRI LANKA 1st innings (overnight 144-6)		NEW ZEALAND 1st innings	
D. Karunaratne c Watling b Southee 65		J. Raval c de Silva b D. Perera 0	
L. Thirimanne c Williamson b Somerville 2		T. Latham not out 111	
K. Mendis c Watling b de Grandhomme 32		K. Williamson c Mendis b Kumara 20	
A. Mathews c Watling b Boult 2		R. Taylor c de Silva b Embuldeniya 23	
K. Perera lbw b Boult 0		H. Nicholls c de Silva b D. Perera 15	
D. de Silva b Boult 109		B.J. Watling not out 25	
N. Dickwella c Watling b Southee 0		Extras (lb, w) 2	
D. Perera lbw b Patel 13		Extras (lb, w, nb) 6	
S. Lakmal c Watling b Southee 10		Total (4 wickets, 62 overs) 196	
L. Embuldeniya lbw b Southee 0		Fall of wickets: 1-1 (Raval), 2-34 (Williamson), 3-84 (Taylor), 4-126 (Nicholls)	
L. Kumara not out 5		Bowling: D. Perera 25-3-76-2, D. de Silva 4-1-8-0, S. Lakmal 4-1-9-0, L. Kumara 11-0-44-1 (w), L. Embuldeniya 18-1-58-1	
Total (all out, 90.2 overs) 244			
Fall of wickets: 1-29 (Thirimanne), 2-79 (Mendis), 3-93 (Mathews), 4-93 (K. Perera), 5-130 (Karunaratne), 6-130 (Dickwella), 7-171 (D. Perera), 8-214 (Lakmal),			

COMMENT

Boycott slams England for 'batting without brains'

AFP
Leeds, United Kingdom

Geoffrey Boycott has torn into England after they collapsed to 67 all out in the third Test against Australia, saying they “batted without brains” and “threw away the Ashes”.

Australia fast bowler Josh Hazlewood took five wickets as England slumped to their worst Ashes total in 71 years, with only Joe Denly (12) among the home batsmen getting to double figures on Friday's second day at Headingley – former England opening batsman Boycott's Yorkshire home ground.

With Ashes-holders Australia already 1-0 up in the five-Test series, victory in this match would see them retain the urn and they consolidated their strong position by getting to 171-6 in their second innings at stumps – a lead of 283 runs.

“What the hell is going on with this England team? How do you expect to win the Ashes with that sort of batting?” Boycott wrote in his column for Britain's *Daily Telegraph* newspaper published yesterday.

“If England had batted all day they would have a lead of 100. So, what did England do? They batted without any brains and threw away the Ashes,” he added.

Several England players gave their wickets away with a scathing Boycott, one of the best defensive batsmen cricket has known, absolving only captain Joe Root of blame among the top order.

“Only one batsman out of seven could say he was got out by the bowlers,” Boycott insisted. “Joe Root received a lovely ball

on a perfect length and line that just left him a touch and he was caught at slip.

“No shame in that,” added Boycott, who scored his 100th first-class hundred in a 1977 Ashes Test against Australia at Headingley.

Boycott was especially critical of World Cup-winner Jason Roy, drafted in as a Test opener this season and now averaging a meagre 9.80 this series after he was caught in the slips for nine following a loose drive off Hazlewood.

“Jason Roy, with no footwork, went flashing at a pitched-up ball he did not need to play,” said Boycott.

“I don't care how many runs he makes second innings. If he plays another Test as an opener then someone wants his brains tested.

“Roy is brilliant in one-day cricket but I must say again, he does not have the defensive technique to stay in consistently against the new ball and he has not got the mental aptitude for patience and concentration that is required to open the batting,” Boycott explained.

Boycott said the dismissal of Jos Buttler (out for five) summed up England's plight.

“Jos Buttler, straight after lunch. They put a short extra cover into him and second ball he spooned it straight to the man. I do not know what he was thinking.

“It is as if the batsmen cannot think straight, cannot handle pressure. It is as if they do not want to stay in and play a few maiden overs.

“England shot themselves in the foot, even if we accept that the Australian fast bowling was excellent.”



England's Jason Roy looks dejected after being caught out on the second day of the third Ashes Test against Australia at Headingley in Leeds, United Kingdom, on Friday. (Reuters)

SPOTLIGHT

I was trying to give my best: Jadeja

FIANS
North Sound, Antigua and Barbuda

After scoring a much needed half-century against West Indies on the second day of the first Test, India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja has said that he was trying to deliver his best.

Asked to bat first, India was reeling at 189 for 6, before Jadeja ensured the visitors reach a good total and stayed in the middle with the tailenders to help his side reach 297 runs in the first innings with a knock of 58 runs.

Speaking after the match on Friday, Jadeja said: “When I was batting out there in the middle, I just looked to build a partnership. I was focussing to play with the tailenders. I was just worried about my game, I was trying to give my best out on the park.”

After stumper Rishabh Pant fell down early on the second day, Ishant Sharma and Jadeja stitched together a 60-run partnership.

Jadeja said that he was constantly talking to Ishant to put together a strong partnership.

“I just looked to build a partnership. I was constantly talking to Ishant, and we talked about staying out in the middle for as long as possible. We were thinking about one over at a time,” the all-rounder said.

“I am just very positive in my mind, my shot selection is positive. When Rishabh got out, I was talking to Ishant about staying out in the middle and building a partnership. It is not good for



opponents if the lower order is constantly scoring runs, so it was the gameplan from our side,” he added.

He also expressed happiness after being included in the first Test and felt he has repaid the faith shown on him by skipper Virat Kohli.

“Obviously you feel good when the skipper believes in you, thinks of you as the main player. Luckily, I have been able to repay the faith by performing well,” Jadeja said.

Meanwhile, he also praised Ishant for his decent bowling.

“Ishant bowled well. The two caught and bowled were remarkable, and I believe those two dismissals as the turning point. On this wicket, you have to bowl in the right areas. Ishant's rhythm improved by each over he bowled. If he did not hold on to two return catches, the situation might have been different. Those two dismissals helped us in turning the momentum into our side,” he concluded.

BOTTOMLINE

India stretch lead as Cummins in record books with 95-minute duck

AFP
North Sound, Antigua and Barbuda

India stretched their lead in the afternoon session despite continuing concerns about the consistency of their top-order batting in getting to 98 for three in the second innings at tea on the third day of the first Test against the West Indies yesterday.

Having dismissed the home side for 222 in the morning period to take a first innings lead of 75 runs, Indian captain Virat Kohli and first innings topscorer Ajinkya Rahane will resume after the break with the visitors seeking to work themselves into an increasingly dominant position.

Roston Chase, whose score of 48 on Friday, was the best ef-

fort in the West Indies' first turn at the crease, showed his worth with his off-spin after lunch on day three in removing openers Mayank Agarwal and KL Rahul while Kumar Roach produced a superb delivery to breach the defence of Cheteshwar Pujara.

Agarwal was ruled leg-before although television replays showed the decision would have been overturned has it been challenged by the batsman.

There was no possibility of a reprieve though for Rahul, bowled round his legs for 38 when he missed an attempted sweep.

Pujara started brightly in getting to 25 but Roach claimed him for the second time in the match.

Whereas in the first innings he edged to the wicketkeeper, this time he was bowled between bat



Roston Chase of West Indies took two wickets against India yesterday. (AFP)

and pad to give the fast bowler his fifth wicket of the match.

India had spent most of the morning session labouring to claim the final two wickets of the home side's first innings as West Indies captain Jason Holder found sturdy support from

Miguel Cummins in putting on 41 for the ninth wicket.

Having slipped from 174 for five to 179 for eight late on day two courtesy of the persistent Ishant Sharma, Kohli and company would have been expecting to finish the job swiftly at the start of play.

However, they did not count on the defiance of Cummins, who hung around with Holder for an hour-and-a-half without getting off the mark.

When the partnership was finally broken – Holder caught behind off Mohammed Shami for 39 – Cummins saw last man Shannon Gabriel pick up two singles immediately.

Attempting to get his first runs though, the fast-medium bowler, who bats left-handed, was bowled having a swing at

Ravindra Jadeja to give the left-arm spinner his second wicket of the innings.

In facing 45 deliveries for his defiant duck, and spending 95 minutes in the middle without getting off the mark, Cummins goes into the record books for the second longest innings in Test cricket for someone being dismissed without scoring.

That dubious record is still held by New Zealander Geoff Allott, who survived for 101 minutes before falling for nought against South Africa in Auckland in 1999.

BRIEF SCORES (at tea): India 297 (A. Rahane 81, R. Jadeja 58, K. Roach 4-66) and **98-3 (KL Rahul 38) lead West Indies 222** (R. Chase 48; I. Sharma 5-43) by **173 runs**

PREMIER LEAGUE

Salah scores a brace as Liverpool sink Arsenal

Klopp's title challengers sit at the top of the Premier League with the last 100% record

AFP
London

Liverpool extended their perfect start to the Premier League season as Mohamed Salah inspired an impressive 3-1 win over Arsenal, while Manchester United suffered fresh penalty woe through Marcus Rashford in their shock home defeat against Crystal Palace yesterday.

Jürgen Klopp's title challengers made it three successive victories thanks to Joel Matip's opener and a brace from Salah, one a stunning solo effort. Liverpool sit at the top of the Premier League with the last 100% record, three points clear of Arsenal, who saw their two-match winning streak ruined by a fatal combination of sloppy defending and poor finishing at Anfield.

Arsenal boss Unai Emery will be furious that Reds defender Matip was able to head home from Trent Alexander-Arnold's 41st-minute corner. And Arsenal were guilty of another needless error four minutes after half-time when former Chelsea defender David Luiz tugged at Salah, conceding a penalty that the Egypt forward drove home for his second goal of the season.

Salah put talk of Arsenal's revival in perspective when he accelerated away from Luiz and Nacho Monreal before finishing off a superb solo strike in the 59th minute. Lucas Torreira got one back in the 85th minute, but it was too late for an Arsenal escape act.

"We were full of power, energy and greed, passion, all what you need to have against a good team like Arsenal," Klopp said. "We were a bit too greedy and didn't split the runs a bit, which we talked about, but overall we were really in charge of the game."

On Monday, Manchester United were forced to settle for a 1-1 draw at Wolves after Paul Pogba's penalty was saved by Rui Patrício when the France star insisted on taking over spot-kick duties from Rashford.

But Rashford fared no better when he hit a post from the spot in the second half against Palace at Old Trafford, putting United on course for their first defeat of the Premier League season as



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah (left) scores against Arsenal during the Premier League match at Anfield. (Reuters)

Patrick van Aanholt grabbed the visitors a 2-1 win in stoppage-time.

Palace took the lead in the 32nd minute as keeper Vicente Guaita thumped the ball upfield and Jeffrey Schlupp flicked on to Jordan Ayew, who was played onside by the slow-to-react Harry Maguire and side-footed past

Daniel James looked to have spared Rashford's blushes when he bagged his second goal for United with a fine finish in the 89th minute. But a terrible blunder by United 'keeper De Gea proved decisive in the third minute of added time as the Spaniard allowed van Aanholt's shot to squeeze under him at the

near post. It was Palace's first league win over United since May 1991 and their first league victory at Old Trafford since December 1989.

Tammy Abraham fired Chelsea to their first win of the Frank Lampard era as the young striker's double clinched a 3-2 victory against Norwich. Lampard had gone three games without a victory in all competitions since he took over as Chelsea manager, but the Blues legend finally got off the mark thanks to his faith in Abraham.

Abraham had failed to score in his three previous appearances this term, but the 21-year-old striker bagged his first goal for the club to put Chelsea ahead at Carrow Road. A pulsating encounter saw Todd Cantwell equalise for Norwich before Mason Mount restored Chelsea's advantage.

Teemu Pukki's fifth goal in three games this season brought Norwich back on level terms before half-time, only for Abraham to give Chelsea the points with his predatory second-half finish. "I am very happy with the result. We want to win games, I want to stay in contention. It gives me more determination to work," Lampard said.

Leicester got their first victory of the campaign as they beat Sheffield United 2-1 at Bramall Lane. Sebastian Haller's first goals for West Ham ensured his side cruised to a 3-1 victory at Watford, while Southampton won 2-0 at 10-man Brighton.

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS

Brighton 0 Southampton 2 (Djenepo 55, Redmond 90+1); Liverpool 3 (Matip 41, Salah 49-pen, 59) Arsenal 1 (Torreira 85); Manchester United 1 (James 89) Crystal Palace 2 (Ayew 32, Van Aanholt 90+3); Norwich 2 (Cantwell 6, Pukki 31) Chelsea 3 (Abraham 3, 68, Mount 17); Sheffield United 1 (McBurnie 62) Leicester 2 (Vardy 38, Barnes 70); Watford 1 (Gray 17) West Ham 3 (Noble 3-pen, Haller 64, 73)

Played Friday: Aston Villa 2 (Wesley 22, El Ghazi 90+5) Everton 0

Playing today: Bournemouth v Manchester City (1300 GMT), Tottenham v Newcastle, Wolves v Burnley (1530 GMT)

Bury given extra time to find buyer amid expulsion threat

Manchester: English League One side Bury have been given extra time by the Football League (EFL) to see if they can complete the sale of the club and secure the finances to complete the season.

The third-tier club had faced a deadline of midnight on Friday to satisfy the league of their financial situation but they asked for more time after receiving a late takeover bid.

Steve Dale, owner of the north-west team, said he had accepted a bid from London company C&N Sporting Risk, who confirmed they were in talks to buy the 134-year-old club. The EFL board met yesterday and decided to give the parties until 5pm local time (1600 GMT) on Tuesday to complete the deal and satisfy them of the club's viability.

"Whilst no formal sale has been completed, despite reports to the contrary, enough credible information was presented to allow the Board to agree to work exclusively with the Club and C&N Sporting Risk over this Bank Holiday weekend in an attempt to finalise the change of control and achieve a positive outcome for Bury FC," the EFL said in a statement.

All of Bury's scheduled games this season have been suspended and the EFL said they were not willing to continue down that path in order to protect the "integrity of the competition". The league said that should the deal not be completed successfully Bury would end their 125-year membership of the Football League.

EFL Executive Chair Debbie Jeavons said the decision was a "final effort to allow the Club the opportunity to survive, to grant an extension and work exclusively with the Club and C&N Sporting Risk to see if a takeover is possible."

"No one wants to see a Club lose its place in the League and we will now work with the potential purchasers over the weekend and ahead of the Tuesday deadline in an attempt to find the solutions required for a sale to take place."

SPOTLIGHT

Solskjaer condemns racist abuse of Rashford as Palace stun Man United

AFP
Manchester

Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer condemned racist tweets sent to Marcus Rashford after the England forward missed a penalty in yesterday's shock 2-1 home defeat to Crystal Palace. The abuse of Rashford came after United midfielder Paul Pogba was also subjected to racist taunts on social media following his failure to score a penalty in Monday's 1-1 draw at Wolves. Pogba had taken penalties duties from Rashford, who resumed the job against Palace, only to miss from the spot for the first time in his career. "My response is the same as before the weekend," said Solskjaer, when informed of what had happened to Rashford.

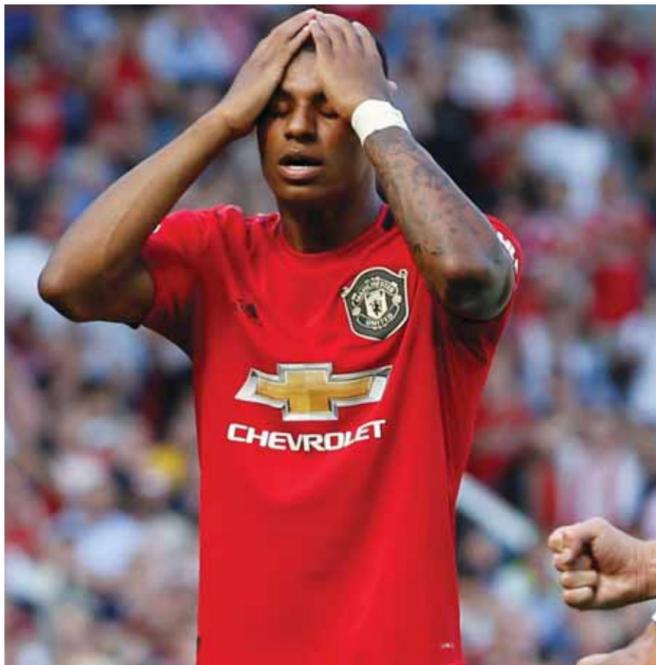
"I am lost for words if it keeps going. We keep having all these campaigns, saying no to racism, but these people keep hiding behind fake identities. It is crazy that we keep talking about this in 2019."

The racist incidents provided a nasty conclusion to a bad afternoon for United as they lost their unbeaten start to the season thanks to a stoppage-time winner from Patrick van Aanholt, which delivered a first league success over United for 28 years for the Eagles.

For Solskjaer, there was only frustration as United now have just one win from their first three games, a record that falls short of the Norwegian's expectations. "We have to learn and we have to learn quickly. The last two games we should have taken six points from them if you had been watching as a neutral," he said.

"Of course, we are two penalty misses away from sitting here smiling. After half an hour of no danger, one long kick and we didn't narrow down. Then for the last goal, after having all that pressure in the second half and David (de Gea) had not touched the ball, they scored again."

After United had dominated the early stages, Palace scored with their first attack. Jeffrey Schlupp beat Victor Lindelof to a long clearance from goalkeeper Vicente Guaita, leaving Jordan Ayew to race through and slot it past De Gea to equal his tally of Premier League goals from last season.



Manchester United's Marcus Rashford reacts after missing a penalty against Crystal Palace during the Premier League match at the Old Trafford in Manchester yesterday. (Reuters)

United looked to have run out of time until young Welsh winger Daniel James, who had earlier been booked for diving, produced an 89th minute equaliser when he produced a lovely curling finish into the top corner after some sharp interplay had finally prised an opening in the Palace rearguard.

Yet with the home crowd urging their team on to grab a winner during five minutes of stoppage-time, they were left stunned as Palace delivered the killer blow. Pogba was guilty of losing possession and the ball was worked towards van Aanholt who had charged forward from left-back and although his shot was well struck, it squirmed under De Gea's body into the net.

"I shall certainly remind myself about this one for a few days, until I start thinking about Colchester in the League Cup and then Aston Villa," Palace boss Roy Hodgson said.

There was also VAR frustration for Solskjaer as he believed his team were denied two further penalties, while Palace defender Gary Cahill was only given a yellow card when he brought down Anthony Martial when he appeared to be the last man just outside the area.

"We know these five days have been disappointing, one point instead of six, so we need to stick together and prepare for Southampton next Saturday," he said.

FOCUS

Chelsea's first win is child's play for manager Lampard

AFP
Norwich, United Kingdom

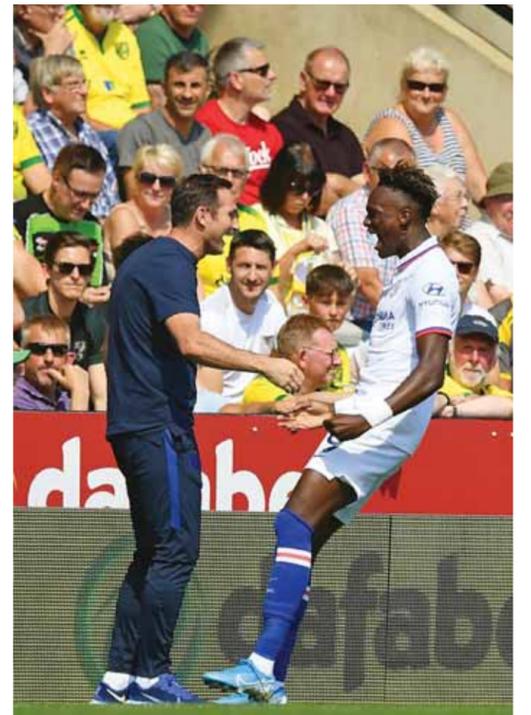
Frank Lampard planned to celebrate his first win as Chelsea manager by playing the doting dad after his young side earned a 3-2 victory at Norwich yesterday. Tammy Abraham's brace and Mason Mount's second goal of the season gave Chelsea their maiden win of the Lampard era at the fourth attempt.

Abraham opened the scoring early on with his first senior goal for Chelsea before Todd Cantwell levelled from close range. Mount put Chelsea back in front but Norwich striker Teemu Pukki grabbed a second equaliser with his fifth goal of the campaign before half-time.

Abraham clinched the points in the second half but Chelsea legend Lampard, whose third child was born last year, had no grand plans to celebrate his maiden victory. "If celebration means a couple of glasses of wine while watching the baby monitor this evening and watching Match of the Day, then that will be it. That's the way life is these days!" he said.

"For me, I am happy, very happy with the result. We want to win games, I want to stay in contention. I didn't want a slow start. We had a tough start and I have got to say I am happy with a lot of the performances. But you can't shout that too loudly if you aren't winning games. So it changes it for me, today. So I am very happy. It gives me more determination to work. I saw a lot of good things, things we can improve but a real good belief in the players, the way they played today. I am happy, but determined, I suppose."

Thrashed 4-0 by Manchester United in their Premier League opener and then held at home



Chelsea's striker Tammy Abraham (left) runs over to celebrate with head coach Frank Lampard after scoring against Norwich. (AFP)

by Leicester, Chelsea's travelling support revelled in the fact their goals came from two players who have come up through the ranks at Stamford Bridge.

Abraham has spent plenty of time out on loan and excelled at Aston Villa in the Championship last season before returning to Chelsea and becoming Lampard's first-choice striker. Mount spent last year with Lampard at Derby and the manager was pleased to see both his young-

sters on the scoresheet. "I think it's the age-old story, fans like to see players that really feel the club," he added. "They are not necessarily local boys, not in the modern way of football because players are from all over the world. But I think they enjoy seeing something because if you come through the academy here you should feel the club, if you work daily and come through at a young age your absolute desire is to do that."

LA LIGA

Bale and James start but Madrid held by Valladolid

Sergi Guardiola levels in the 88th minute as Valladolid snatch a point

AFP
Madrid

Gareth Bale and James Rodriguez started together for the first time in over two years yesterday but Real Madrid were denied victory after a late equaliser by Real Valladolid grabbed a 1-1 draw. Bale and James both looked certain to leave Madrid this summer but each were included by Zinedine Zidane in a line-up that was without a single new signing for the second game in a row.

Instead, Karim Benzema looked to have won it when he found the corner in the 82nd minute at the Santiago Bernabeu but Sergi Guardiola levelled in the 88th and Valladolid snatched a point.

With Eden Hazard and Ferland Mendy both injured, Luka Jovic and Eder Militao on the bench and Rodrygo gaining experience in the B team, there was little to show for Madrid's 300mn euros spent.

Jovic came on, and hit the crossbar, yet this was a team looking back not forwards, James starting his first Madrid match since April 2017, alongside Bale, whose reintegration continues after his impressive display last weekend against Celta Vigo. But while Madrid scored three in Vigo, they were toothless here, their lack of cutting edge in the final third, so often their undoing last season, once again meant chances were not converted into points. Their pursuit of Paris Saint-Germain striker Neymar may assume added urgency before the transfer window closes on September 2.

Valladolid, who won away at Real Betis on the opening weekend, rode their luck too but defended with determination and Guardiola's finish was certainly not their only chance. Madrid had 14 attempts at goal in the first half and while none of them could go down as glaring misses, Valladolid were breathing heavily by the break.



Real Valladolid's Sergi Guardiola is delighted after scoring the equaliser against Real Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu. (Reuters)

Bale and James were at the heart of things, their energy and enthusiasm appreciated by the crowd, who were in a far more sympathetic mood than during the miserable final weeks of last season. A fresh start meant a clean slate perhaps, for Bale too, as he sent the kind of shot over the bar that would have brought whistles from the fans in May but instead now drew applause.

Bale looked more likely to score than anyone else, falling just short of Isco's cross and then stabbing James' cutback wide. James and Benzema both saw a handful of half-chances go begging. Valladolid broke through once before half-time after Casemiro's mistake allowed Enes Unal to storm the Madrid penalty

area but Sergio Ramos intervened.

They might have had an even better chance early in the second period but Guardiola's ball was blocked when Unal looked set to go through one-on-one. James departed just before the hour for Vinicius Junior and soon after, Isco was replaced by Jovic, whose first touch was a flicked header that grazed the top of the crossbar.

Bale's run and cross had created it. Valladolid had survived and sensed the tension growing. They might have nicked it when Waldo's cross evaded everyone, including Guardiola who was free at the back post.

Instead, Benzema scored with a brilliant strike on the turn, that found its

way into the corner and seemed certain to win it for Madrid. But Valladolid had a late trick up their sleeve as Guardiola ran free of Raphael Varane at the back post and poked through the legs of home goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois.

SPANISH LA LIGA RESULTS

Osasuna 0 Eibar 0; Real Madrid 1 (Benzema 82) Real Valladolid 1 (Guardiola 88)
Playing today: Alaves v Espanyol (1500), Mallorca v Real Sociedad (1500), Leganes v Atletico Madrid (1700), Barcelona v Real Betis (1900)
Played Friday: Granada 0 Sevilla 1 (Jordan 52); Levante 2 (Roger 68-pen, 73-pen) Villarreal 1 (Moreno 3)

BUNDESLIGA

Lewandowski hits hat-trick as Coutinho makes Bayern bow

AFP
Berlin

Robert Lewandowski scored a hat-trick to fire Bayern Munich to a 3-0 victory over Schalke yesterday as Brazilian midfielder Philippe Coutinho made his Bundesliga debut for the German giants. Coutinho, on loan from Barcelona, replaced Thomas Mueller in the 57th minute, coming on alongside fellow debutant Ivan Perisic with Bayern already two goals up.

Bayern, who have not lost to Schalke in the league since 2010, took the lead from a penalty on 20 minutes.

English right-back Jonjoe Kenny, on loan to Schalke from Everton, clattered into the back of Kingsley Coman, and Lewandowski slotted home from 12 yards to score against Schalke for the ninth game in a row.

The Polish striker then curled in a spectacular free-kick to double the lead just after half-time. A resurgent Schalke had several handball penalty appeals turned down as Bayern struggled to maintain control in the second half. Yet Lewandowski killed the game 15 minutes from time, slipping away from marker Salif Sane to slot home his third.

Everton loanee Kenny was not the only unfortunate Englishman yesterday, as an own-goal from Lewis Baker sent Bayer Leverkusen on their way to a 3-1 win over Fortuna Duesseeldorf earlier in the day.

Chelsea loanee Baker turned a Kevin Volland cross into his own net after just six minutes. Charles Aranguiz and Karim Bellarabi added two more in a stylish first-half performance from Champions League qualifiers Leverkusen. Yet Volland bemoaned his side's lapse in concentration after Alfredo Morales grabbed a consolation goal for Duesseeldorf. "We deserved to win but we are not at 100%. Otherwise we would have kept a clean sheet," he said.

Werder Bremen still have no

points from their opening two games after they lost a five-goal thriller to Hoffenheim. The home side looked comfortable after second-half goals from Ermin Bicakcic and Ihlas Bebou had cancelled out Niclas Füllkrug's opener and Bremen had a player sent off.

Yet Yuya Osako drew the visitors level with a slaloming run and fine finish before Pavel Kaderabek's header three minutes from time sealed a 3-2 win for Hoffenheim.

New Borussia Moenchengladbach boss Marco Rose celebrated his first three points as goals from Stefan Lainer, Alassane Plea and Breel Embolo saw his side come from behind to beat Mainz 3-1. Freiburg, who thrashed Mainz 3-0 last weekend, picked up a second win in two as they beat promoted side Paderborn 3-1.

Goals from Luca Waldschmidt, Nils Petersen and South Korea's Chang-Hoon Kwon secured the win after Strelji Mamba had given Paderborn an early lead. Sebastian Andersson scored Union Berlin's first ever Bundesliga goal, cancelling out Ruben Vargas' opener to secure a 1-1 draw with his late equaliser at Augsburg.

BUNDESLIGA RESULTS

Schalke 0 Bayern Munich 3 (Lewandowski 20-pen, 50, 75); Fortuna Duesseeldorf 1 (Morales 82) Bayer Leverkusen 3 (Baker 6-og, Aranguiz 33, Bellarabi 39); Mainz 1 (Quaison 18) Borussia Moenchengladbach 3 (Lainer 31, Plea 78, Embolo 79); Augsburg 1 (Vargas 59) Union Berlin 1 (Andersson 80); Paderborn 1 (Mamba 3) Freiburg 3 (Waldschmidt 21-pen, Petersen 40, Kwon 90+1); Hoffenheim 3 (Bicakcic 54, Bebou 59, Kaderabek 87) Werder Bremen 2 (Fuellkrug 42, Osako 81)
Playing today (all times GMT): RB Leipzig v Eintracht Frankfurt (1330), Hertha Berlin v Wolfsburg (1600)
Played Friday: Cologne 1 (Drexler 29) Borussia Dortmund 3 (Sancho 70, Hakimi 86, Alcacer 90+4)



Bayern Munich's Polish forward Robert Lewandowski celebrates after scoring his third goal during the Bundesliga match against Schalke in Gelsenkirchen, western Germany, yesterday. (AFP)

Barca coach wants more from Griezmann as Messi doubtful to face Betis

Madrid: Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde has said he will not risk Lionel Messi's fitness against Real Betis today and insists it is up to everyone to integrate Antoine Griezmann into the team. Messi has returned to training this week after the Argentinian sustained a calf injury on August 5 and missed the whole of Barca's pre-season.

"If he is not 100 per cent, I think he won't play," said Valverde in a press conference yesterday. "We have to wait for training, I can't predict anything. I don't

know if we can count on him, or not, or to what extent."

Valverde will be particularly eager to have Messi back after Barcelona's 1-0 opening defeat to Athletic Bilbao in La Liga last weekend, during which both Luis Suarez and Ousmane Dembele were injured.

It leaves Griezmann as the only fully-fit striker for the game at home to Betis but the Frenchman was quiet against Bilbao, struggling to make an impact on his first competitive start for the club.

"He is settling in more and more every day," Valverde said. "What we want is for him to be involved a lot in the game. We know if he is involved, if he is busy and gets on the ball, he can be decisive."

"The other day against Athletic at San Mames, he was not as involved as we would have liked but it is also up to us to help him, to allow our strikers to participate more. We have to make our possession more productive, we have to work hard to bring them into play because we know they can be dangerous. It is the

same for Antoine."

Dembele and Suarez are not expected back until after the international break after they picked up hamstring and calf injuries respectively. Valverde also refused to comment on reports that Dembele skipped club medical tests last weekend to spend time in France.

"I don't want to talk too much about the Dembele thing," Valverde said. "People always make a lot out of things to do with him so I am not going to comment."

FOCUS

Tuchel and Valverde tight-lipped over Neymar future

AFP
Paris

Paris Saint-Germain coach Thomas Tuchel said Neymar is "ready" for today's Ligue 1 game but whether he plays depends on developments in the Brazilian's bid to leave the club. Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde, meanwhile, claimed yesterday that he is in the dark over any fresh bid for the 27-year-old.

Neymar is angling for a return to Spain but reports this week suggest PSG have rejected an offer from Real Madrid of 100mn euros (\$111mn) plus players.

Neymar arrived amid deafening fanfare from Barcelona two years ago as the world's most expensive player in a 222mn euros deal. Barca's own attempt to bring him back to the Camp Nou on loan with an obligation to buy for 160mn euros at the end of the season has also been reportedly rejected in Paris.

Tuchel toyed with reporters yesterday when asked if his wantaway forward would figure

for the first time since injuring his ankle at the end of May. "He can play (against Toulouse) if the situation between him and the club is clear....today it's not clear, perhaps tomorrow it will be," he said.

Pressed, the German added that Neymar was "ready to play" but that the final decision rested with the club's sporting director. "Perhaps you have to speak to Leonardo," he suggested. "Neymar's had a good week (training) with all the squad, a week with a lot of work and intensity."

The transfer window closes in France, Spain and Italy on September 2, meaning time is fast running out for a deal to be done. Valverde remained tight-lipped when asked again about Neymar in a Barcelona press conference yesterday.

"There are certain players like Neymar that create a lot of interest," Valverde said.

"I don't know anything about it, we'll see what happens. First of all, he is a PSG player and we have to worry more about tomorrow's game than anything else."

SERIE A

Chiellini gets Juve off mark as Ronaldo frustrated

AFP
Milan

Juventus captain Giorgio Chiellini scored the first goal of the Serie A season yesterday as the champions kicked off their bid for a ninth consecutive title with a run of the mill 1-0 win at Parma. New Juventus coach Maurizio Sarri was missing from the sidelines as he recovers from pneumonia which will also see him miss next weekend's game against Napoli in Turin.

But defender Chiellini made the difference early, connecting with an Alex Sandro cross off a corner to fire in after 21 minutes at the Ennio Tardini stadium in Emilia Romagna. It was just the 27th goal in Chiellini's 14-year Juventus career.

Portuguese superstar Cristiano Ronaldo drew a blank as he begins his second season in Italy with a goal ruled offside and several missed efforts. Sarri's arrival has been hailed as the dawn of a new era for Juventus with a different exciting style of football.

But the Turin giants new-look side resembled Massimiliano Allegri's last season. Apart from returning Argentine forward Gonzalo Higuain, back from a loan to Chelsea, preferred up front alongside Ronaldo in place of Paulo Dybala, the time was the same as last season.

Juventus's new Dutch defender Matthijs De Ligt remained on the bench with Welsh international Aaron Ramsey not in the group, while French midfielder Adrien Rabiot came on after an hour in place



Juventus' Giorgio Chiellini (left) celebrates with teammates after scoring during the Italian Serie A match against Parma. (AFP)

of Sami Khedira. "What will Sarri say to us? He will congratulate us," said Brazilian winger Costa.

"We took three important points, playing in Parma is always very difficult for Juventus. It was a difficult game, physical. We need to improve at the level of fitness, but we are on the right track."

Parma finished 14th on their return to Serie A last season having been demoted following bankruptcy. But they pushed the champions hard with Robert Inglese denied twice in the first half by Juventus goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny.

Ronaldo squandered a golden chance after half an hour controlling a Higuain cross with his chest but sending wide across the face of goal. The Portuguese looked to have made up for his earlier error on 34 minutes, finishing off a Douglas Costa effort into the back of goal.

The goal was ruled offside after consultation with VAR with Ronaldo deemed to be marginally offside.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner again proved wasteful after an hour latching on to a Costa cross but sending the ball over the top of goal. His frustration continued

five minutes later with Parma goalkeeper Luigi Sepe denying the Portuguese as full stretch.

Brazilian Hernani missed a chance to snatch a point for Parma rifling a freekick just wide allowing the champions off the hook to finish with all three points. Carlo Ancelotti's Serie A runners-up Napoli were in action later last night in Fiorentina.

The southerners have not won the title since 1990 and open in Tuscany with new French signing Franck Ribery set to make his debut for the hosts.

BASKETBALL WORLD CUP

Mills shoots Australia to first-ever win over USA

AFP
Melbourne

San Antonio Spurs' guard Patty Mills sank a game-high 30 points as Australia beat the United States for the first time ever yesterday, stunning the basketball world champions 98-94 in a huge upset. Andrew Bogut added 16 points with nine rebounds and four assists while Joe Ingles scored 15 and seven assists in front of 52,079 fans in Melbourne — the biggest ever crowd to watch a game of hoops in Australia.

Boston's Kemba Walker led USA with 22 points off the bench, but it wasn't enough to prevent a rare defeat for Gregg Popovich's world number one team in a massive wake-up call ahead of the World Cup in China, which tips off on August 31.

"The support has been amazing. We're very proud to represent these fans and in the right way. We're doing it as a team, as a group," said veteran Mills, who was electric in the fourth quarter. This is a building block for us, we are just taking it step-by-step. It's just nice to see our progress."

Popovich's squad lacks a host of top NBA stars with the likes of LeBron James, James Harden, Anthony Davis and Kawhi Leonard all opting out of the World Cup. But it still boasts plenty of young talent and they comfortably beat Australia 102-86 in a warm-up game on Thursday, on the back of a 90-81 victory over second-ranked Spain in California this month.

"We need to congratulate the Boomers, they were really great tonight," said Popovich, who referred to Mills, who he coaches at the Spurs, as "a pain in the arse". "We looked discombobulated at times, made some poor decisions," he added of his team, who gave up a 10-point third-quarter lead.

"Some of it is expected with a new group, trying to learn new systems so it's not surprising. But the Aussies gave us a great lesson in far as where you want to be and how you want to play in this type of competition. We're getting used to that and hopefully learning."

Skipper Walker explained the loss by saying: "They wanted it more than us tonight. Lesson learned." The USA tinkered with their line-up, with only two starters from the first game — Donovan Mitchell and Myles Turner.

Los Angeles Lakers' Kyle Kuzma was ruled out with a sore ankle. In contrast, Australia stuck with the same experienced five, led by Mills, Bogut, Ingles, Aron Baynes and Jock Landale. The five-time world champion Americans hit their first points within 20 seconds and with good offence and finishing hung on to the lead, ending the first quarter with a 26-23 advantage.

But quick points at the re-start from veteran Bogut drew Australia level and in a seesawing second quarter they traded buckets before a late two-point-er from San Antonio Spurs' Derrick White gave the visitors a 49-48 first-half lead.

As they did in their match on Thursday, the USA lifted in the third quarter and raced 10 points clear. But back-to-back threes from Mills closed the gap and two late free throws from Chris Goulding remarkably sent the Boomers into the final quarter with a 78-76 lead.

With the record crowd roaring them on, Australia took control as the clock ticked down to close an epic victory in their final game before heading to China. Team USA have one more warm-up left, against Canada in Sydney tomorrow.



Australia's Patty Mills scored 30 points against the United States.

MLB

Gregorius helps Yankees beat Dodgers

Yankees won after getting swept in a three-game series at the Athletics last week

Reuters
Los Angeles

Didi Gregorius hit two home runs, including a grand slam, while Aaron Judge, Gary Sanchez and Gleyber Torres also went deep on Friday as the New York Yankees took the opener of a showdown series by crushing the Los Angeles Dodgers 10-2.

In an interleague battle between the teams with the best records in the majors, Gregorius followed an intentional walk to Sanchez in the fifth inning with his 12th home run of the season and fifth career slam. He hit a solo shot in the ninth inning. Three of the home runs, including one by Gregorius, came against Dodgers left-hander Hyun-Jin Ryu, who entered with a National League-leading 1.64 ERA that increased to 1.95. Yankees starter James Paxton (10-6) gave up two runs on five hits over 6 2/3 innings, with 11 strikeouts, including three against NL MVP candidate Cody Bellinger.

The Yankees won after getting swept in a three-game series at the Oakland Athletics earlier this week.

Ryu (12-4) matched a season high with seven earned runs, the same number he gave up June 28 at Colorado.

That outing was the only other time he went less than five innings in a start, not counting his 1 2/3 innings at the St. Louis Cardinals on April 8, when he left early with a groin injury. The Dodgers, who were coming off a home sweep of the Toronto Blue Jays, lost in their ballpark for just the second time in their last 12 games. They are now 51-17 at Dodger Stadium.

The Yankees, one of two major league teams with more home runs than the Dodgers, first showed off their power in the third inning, when Judge and Sanchez went deep. Judge's low line drive into the seats in left field was his 14th of the season, while Sanchez hit his 29th and the 100th of his career.

With the bases full against Ryu in the fifth, Gregorius hit the first pitch he saw over the wall in right-centre field for a 6-1 lead. When Gio Urshela followed two pitches later with a double, Ryu's day was done.

Torres hit his 32nd home run of the season in the sixth inning off Yimi Garcia, giving him nine in his past 12 games. He has hit safely in 14 of 17 interleague games this season. Enrique Hernandez had two hits for the Dodgers, while rookie Will Smith struck out four times. The Yankees



New York Yankees shortstop Didi Gregorius hits a grand slam home run in the fifth inning against the Los Angeles Dodgers during an MLB match at the Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles on Friday. (USA TODAY Sports)

MEADOWS' GRAND SLAM KEYS RAYS' WIN OVER ORIOLES

Austin Meadows belted a grand slam, the key hit in a seven-run second inning that helped the visiting Tampa Bay Rays defeat the Baltimore Orioles 7-1 on Friday night. Meadows also homered in Thursday's come-from-behind 5-2 win, but that was a solo shot.

This game was a different story, as Meadows' first career grand slam broke things open pretty quickly and gave the Rays command. Tampa Bay also received a strong effort from starter Trevor Richards (4-12). This was just his second game — and start — since coming to the

Rays from Miami in a July 31 deal, and he threw six shutout innings, giving up only two hits while striking out five and walking one.

Richards had a no-decision in his first start but shut down the Orioles in this one. This victory also ended a personal seven-game losing streak for Richards. He had not won since June 2 while starting for the Marlins at San Diego.

Aaron Slegers threw the final three innings and earned his first career save. Baltimore starter Ty Blach (0-2) gave up seven runs and nine hits in his four innings of work. Blach struck out two and walked two, and threw 47 pitches in the second inning alone.

The Orioles did get some help from their bullpen after that. Rookie Dillon

Tate, called up earlier in the day from Triple-A Norfolk, threw three scoreless innings of relief after Blach left. It was Tate's fourth major league game.

Kevin Kiermaier started things in the second with an RBI double that gave the Rays a 1-0 lead. After that, Tampa Bay scored six times with two outs. Mike Zunino lined a two-run single to right that made it 3-0. Meadows later got his grand slam, a blast to right-centre that gave the Rays a 7-0 lead.

The Orioles now have given up 261 home runs this year; they set a new single-season record in that category when allowing two home runs in Thursday's loss. Baltimore scored its only run of the night on a home run, from Jonathan Villar, in the eighth.

Lakers to sign Howard to a non-guaranteed contract

By Tania Ganguli
Los Angeles Times

Looking to rewrite his LA story, Dwight Howard is on the verge of becoming a Laker again, according to sources familiar with the deal. Howard, an eight-time All-Star who won three defensive player of the year awards, has agreed to a buyout with the Memphis Grizzlies.

He will sign a one-year non-guaranteed deal with the Lakers once he clears waivers. The move brings back a controversial center who spent the 2012-13 season with the Lakers before shunning the team in free agency. Howard worked out for the Lakers this week.

According to a person familiar with his condition, Howard is fully healthy, having taken last season to recover from surgery on a disc in his lower back. The Lakers had only one center on their roster after losing DeMarcus Cousins to a torn anterior cruciate ligament last week.

They also worked out Joakim Noah and Mareese Speights this week. Howard has become a journeyman late in his career but has started all but one game in which he's played throughout his career. Drafted out of high school in 2004 by the Orlando Magic, he spent eight seasons there, taking Orlando to the 2009 NBA Finals, in which they lost to the Lakers.

In the summer of 2012, the Magic traded Howard to the

Lakers, against his wishes. He spent one season with the Lakers, sometimes clashing with Kobe Bryant and battling a severe shoulder injury during it but still playing in 76 games.

The following summer, the Lakers tried desperately to keep Howard, even erecting a billboard asking him to stay. Howard left and signed with the Houston Rockets instead. The Rockets got as far as the Western Conference finals with Howard on their team.

Howard left Houston after three seasons and signed with his hometown Atlanta Hawks. The Hawks traded Howard to the Charlotte Hornets in the summer of 2017. He averaged 16.6 points and 12.5 rebounds with the Hornets during the 2017-18 season and played in 81 games.

A year later, the Hornets traded Howard to the Brooklyn Nets, who waived him. Howard then signed with the Washington Wizards, but injuries once again hampered his ability to contribute. He had surgery to repair a disc on his lower back in November and only played in nine games last season.

The Grizzlies, to whom the Washington Wizards traded Howard this summer, never intended to keep Howard. They gave Howard's agent permission to speak with other teams to find a landing spot for Howard. Cousins' injury gave Howard a chance at redemption.

FOCUS

Subban and Vonn announce engagement



P K Subban (left) and Lindsey Vonn. (AFP)

Reuters
Los Angeles

Olympic gold-medalist skier Lindsey Vonn is engaged to be married for the second time. New Jersey Devils defenseman P K Subban and Vonn announced their engagement on Friday in an article in *Vogue*. "Right off the bat, I knew he was different," Vonn, a four-time Olympian, said in the article. "But I'd been married before, so I was pretty hesitant to let myself think that I could find someone that I would want to be married to again. After a few months of dating, I knew he was the one I wanted to be with, though. He makes me happy, and he's so positive and energetic."

Vonn, 34, is the champion female Alpine racer having won all time highest 82 World Cup, 20 World Cup titles, three Olympic medals and eight World Championship medals. Vonn previously was married to fellow Olympic skier Thomas Vonn and later dated Tiger Woods after her divorce. She met Subban, 30, at the Nickelodeon sports show in 2017 before going public with the relationship in June 2018. Like Vonn, Subban also has an Olympic gold medal in his possession. The three-time NHL All-Star and former Norris Trophy recipient won gold while playing for Canada in the 2014 Sochi Games while Vonn has three Olympic medals, including a gold in downhill skiing.

"Lindsey's the best thing that's ever happened to me," Subban said in the article. Subban proposed last month at the couple's home in Los Angeles.

MLB RESULTS

St. Louis Cardinals 8 bt Colorado Rockies 3; Boston Red Sox 11 bt San Diego Padres 0; Washington Nationals 9 bt Chicago Cubs 3; New York Yankees 10 bt Dodgers 2; Atlanta Braves 2 bt New York Mets 1 (14 innings); Milwaukee Brewers 6 bt Arizona Diamondbacks 1; Houston Astros 5 bt Los Angeles Angels 4; Detroit Tigers 9 bt Minneapolis Twins 6; Tampa Bay Rays 7 bt Baltimore Orioles 1; Miami Marlins 19 bt Philadelphia Phillies 11; Cleveland Indians 4 bt Kansas City Royals 1; Pittsburgh Pirates 3 bt Cincinnati Reds 2; Chicago White Sox 8 bt Texas Rangers 3; Seattle Mariners 7 bt Toronto



RUGBY

England run Irish ragged to deliver World Cup warning

'It was definitely fun... exciting thing is that we have our best rugby ahead of us'

AFP
Twickenham, United Kingdom

Joe Cokanasiga scored twice as England laid down a warning to their Rugby World Cup rivals with an astonishing 57-15 trouncing of Ireland at Twickenham on Saturday.

England ran in eight tries in all – man of the match Manu Tuilagi getting one of them – as they recorded both their highest score and largest winning margin over their opponents.

For Ireland, who won the Six Nations Grand Slam and beat New Zealand last year, it was a bitter reality check in a game they had hopes of becoming world number one.

"That is not up to the standard that we set ourselves. It is hard to describe it without using a lot of profanity," Ireland captain Rory Best told broadcasters Sky Sports.

"We are nowhere near where we need to be, the only upside is that it is the middle of August and not the middle of September."

England skipper Owen Farrell laid down a marker for his side to improve even further after the record victory.

"It was definitely fun. I love it every time I put this jersey on. We are building," Farrell said.

"The most exciting thing is that we have our best rugby ahead of us."

Both sides came roaring out of the blocks in the baking heat with Farrell landing the first blow with a penalty in the seventh minute.

The visitors struck back as Rob Kearney's superb long pass found Jacob Stockdale as the Ulster winger touched down for his fifth Test try.

Ross Byrne, making his maiden start at fly-half, showed no nerves as he converted from wide out on the left for 7-3.

For all Jordan Larmour's style in attack, his Achilles



England's Manu Tuilagi (centre) celebrates a try with teammates Tom Curry (right) and Joe Cokanasiga (left) during the international Test rugby union match against Ireland at Twickenham yesterday. (AFP)

heel is his defence and he was left grasping at air as he tried to tackle Cokanasiga, who brushed him aside to touch down in the 13th minute – Tuilagi's decoy run having sucked in the Irish defence.

Farrell failed to convert but England had their noses in front at 8-7.

Byrne, who is vying to be on the plane to Japan to back up the injured Joey Carbery and number one Johnny Sexton, slotted over an excellent penalty to give the Irish a 10-8 lead.

TREMENDOUS TUILAGI

Tuilagi once again caused panic in the Irish defence and Stockdale repeated an error from the first try in coming off his wing and Tom Curry fed Elliot Daly who ran in to touch down.

Tuilagi did not bother setting anyone up for the third try going on his own paying little notice to Stockdale's effort at a tackle as Farrell added the extras.

Ireland's problems deepened shortly before half-time as veteran prop Cian Healy limped off.

The Irish began the second-half also without Conor Murray who had taken a knock to the head in the first-half from Jonny May's shoulder and had briefly returned after passing a Head Injury Assessment.

Five minutes after the break Ireland lost a line-out and ended with Maro Itoje bursting through the middle, to score under the posts.

Tuilagi caused more havoc in the Irish defence setting up George Kruis to go over for a try which Farrell converted for 36-10.

The hosts crossed the 50-point mark with a quarter of an hour to play.

Flanker Curry crossed before Cokanasiga added his second after 66 minutes with Farrell adding the two points.

Bundee Aki had a rough day defending Tuilagi but once the latter had gone off he gained a little consolation in breaking through from outside the 22, fending off Daly to touch down.

Luke Cowan-Dickie rounded off Irish misery with another try – George Ford converting.

SPOTLIGHT

Scots redeem themselves with victory over France

AFP
Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Chris Harris' converted second-half try gave Scotland their first win in six Tests as they beat France 17-14 in a Rugby World Cup warm-up Test at Murrayfield yesterday.

Harris's effort and one from Sean Maitland at the end of the first-half – also converted by Greig Laidlaw – helped the hosts win from behind and bounce back from the humiliating 32-3 thrashing by Les Bleus last weekend.

Pleasing for head coach Gregor Townsend – who made 14 changes to the starting XV from the first match – was they held the French scoreless in the second-half. Worryingly he lost three players to injuries in Tommy Seymour, Sam Skinner and Blade Thomson on his debut.

France, like last weekend, scored early on with Clermont winger Damian Penaud dotting down after 110 seconds, repeating club team-mate, Alivereti Raka's feat in Nice.

"It was a great opportunity for us after last weekend and winning makes it all the sweeter," Scotland captain Laidlaw said.

"We never started well but we dug in deep and had trust in the group. Our defence went a long way to winning the game – and international rugby is all about winning," he added.

The visitors' captain Guilhem Guirado praised his side's impressive start but complained about their failure to cross the Scottish line during the final 40 minutes.

"We started very well, we put a lot of pressure on them with our defence. It's a pity we lacked accuracy," Guirado told France TV.

"What we lacked was keeping the ball well, as to be more dangerous. We also scored zero points in the second-half which is a shame," he added.

OMINOUS START

Things looked ominous for the Scots early on as Penaud intercepted and ran half the length of the pitch to touch down in the second minute. Thomas Ramos converted.

Laidlaw reduced the deficit shortly afterwards with a penalty.

The Scots showed much more enterprise than in the previous clash, Sean Maitland making a great solo break deep into French territory but his good work was spoiled as the home side conceded a penalty allowing the visitors to relieve the pressure.



Scotland's Chris Harris (right) is tackled by France's Damian Penaud during the match in Edinburgh yesterday. (AFP)

An error by Finn Russell cost the Scots dearly a few minutes later.

The fly-half failed to gather a high ball giving the French possession. When it came to Gael Fickou he burst through mid-field, leaving Maitland and Ryan Wilson trailing, then passed to Penaud who ran it in.

Ramos converted for 14-3. Russell tried to redeem himself with a beautiful chip over the French backline but Maitland could only flick it back inside on the touchline and Stuart Hogg was unable to gather the ball.

Maitland had more joy at the end of the first-half as he went over for his 12th Test try after Russell found him out wide.

Laidlaw knocked over an excellent touchline conversion to send the hosts in at half-time trailing by just four points, 14-10.

The Scots went ahead for the first time in the match on the hour mark as Laidlaw fed Harris, who crashed over. Laidlaw added the extras to lead 17-14.

After that, the Scots closed the French down, extinguishing any hopes the visitors had of just their fourth away win since the last World Cup.

BOTTOMLINE

Kosovo, an unexpected world judo stronghold

AFP
Pristina, Kosovo

The young and tiny nation of Kosovo has emerged as a world judo power, its unexpected success spearheaded by diminutive Olympic champion Majlinda Kelmendi.

Eleven years after it gained independence from Serbia and in her first summer Olympics, Kelmendi's success in Rio in 2016 enabled Kosovo and its 2mn people to beat its big brother Albania that has never won an Olympic medal in any sport.

Kelmendi goes in search of more gold when she competes in the world championships in Tokyo that start today.

Kosovo's judo success story was created by coach Driton "Toni" Kuka in the small town of Pec where he founded a judo club with his brothers.

A training room with a leaky roof and worn carpets did not prevent the club from producing champions – the authorities decided only recently to finance its renovation.

"I'm sure that if there was no Toni, Kosovo would not have all these medals today, especially the Olympic gold," Kelmendi, 28, told AFP.

She became a national hero thanks to her exploits in Rio, which followed world titles in 2013 and 2014.

In the poor Balkan country, where football is the main sport, the judokas can hardly expect to be top of the list for financial aid from the authorities. They receive only 250,000 euros



In this June 22, 2019, picture, Majlinda Kelmendi of Kosovo (left) in action with Russia's Natalia Kuziutina in the women's judo under 52kg gold medal bout at the 2019 European Games in Minsk, Belarus. (AFP)

(\$281,000) annually, Kuka said, from the government's entire sports budget of 17mn euros.

REVENGE ON HISTORY

Kelmendi, who also holds European titles and dominated the European Games in Minsk this year, is the brightest star on Kuka's team. But she is no longer alone. She now leads a group whose members aspire for their share of world titles.

Distria Krasniqi, 25, is world junior champion and Nora Gjakova, 28, won bronze at the European championships.

"In different age categories, we now have 14 judokas who have reached the highest level,"

said 48-year-old Kuka.

Most come from the same neighbourhood.

By creating such a powerful team Kuka is taking revenge on Kosovo's turbulent history that took a heavy toll on his own career.

In 1992, as the Barcelona Olympics approached, Kuka was the best Yugoslav judoka in the men's under 71kg division and one of the favourites for a medal.

But since 1989, the situation had been tense in Kosovo whose ethnic Albanian majority was under the yoke of the then Belgrade strongman Slobodan Milosevic.

Within a wider civic resistance movement, orchestrated

by the "father of the nation" Ibrahim Rugova, ethnic Albanian athletes quit Yugoslav squads.

"My Olympic dream was broken," recalled Kuka, adding that he had beaten all the Barcelona medallists in the runup to the Games.

TRAINING IN RUINS

At the end of the 1998-1999 war, when Nato air strikes forced Belgrade to withdraw its troops from Kosovo, Kuka founded his club at Asllan Ceshme, a poor neighbourhood in the foothills of the mountains, which the inhabitants found had been largely destroyed when they returned.

Their children were his first trainees. "Kosovo was in ruins and children traumatised," he recalled.

Kelmendi, who lived "100 metres from the hall", was among those who joined the club, the coach recalled.

"I didn't know anything about this sport, but I was happy," Kelmendi said. "We children had nothing else to do."

Kelmendi's exploits in winning world and Olympic titles brought her compatriots into the streets to celebrate.

"We have transformed children who have suffered from the war into world champions, measuring ourselves against countries like France, Japan or Brazil that have thousands of judokas available to build their teams," Kuka said.

For Kosovo-based sports journalist Arsim Maxhera, Kelmendi "is the biggest success story in the country, not just in sport".

"There is no title that has escaped" these judokas "who all come from a single neighbourhood", he said.

Their success is contagious – because Pec, or Peja in Albanian, now has five judo clubs, with up to 500 people in training.

The prodigies from Asllan Ceshme now want to conquer Tokyo, where the world championships will serve as a warm-up event for the 2020 Olympics.

Gjakova said he planned to go to Japan "to crown all this work with a medal".

Kuka feels his group's success has helped him to fulfil his own Olympic ambitions that were thwarted by war. "My dream that was half-broken one day is now 100 percent achieved," he said.

FOCUS

Boks wing Dyantyi tests positive for banned substance

Reuters
Cape Town, South Africa

South Africa wing Aphiwe Dyantyi has tested positive for an unspecified banned substance but denies wrongdoing and has requested his B sample to be analysed.

The 2018 World Rugby Breakthrough Player of the Year tested positive during a Springbok training camp last month and said he was determined to clear his name.

"I want to deny ever taking any prohibited substance, intentionally or negligently to enhance my performance on the field. I believe in hard work and fair play," Dyantyi said in a statement yesterday.

"I have never cheated and never will. The presence of this prohibited substance in my body has come as a massive shock to me and together with my management team and experts appointed by them, we are doing everything we can to get to the source of this and to prove my innocence.

"As a professional sportsman on national and international level, we get tested on a regular

basis. I have been tested before and again, since this test.

"Taking any prohibited substance would not only be irresponsible and something that I would never intentionally do, it would also be senseless and stupid."

Dyantyi revealed he had tested positive on July 2 but had also undergone a test on June 15 which did not return a positive finding.

"I want to apologise in advance to my team mates and management at the Lions and Springboks, my friends and my family for the negative impact this news may have.

"Personally, this game has given me an opportunity to inspire not only the young rugby hopefuls but South Africans across all walks of life and that is something I do not take for granted and something I would definitely not risk by doing a stupid act like this."

Bok coach Rassie Erasmus will announce his Rugby World Cup squad tomorrow but had already ruled Dyantyi out of contention for selection due to a hamstring injury.

The wing made his international debut against England in June last year and played 13 tests for the Boks, scoring six tries.

GOLF

Late birdie lifts Koepka to lead

'I mean, the lead's always nice, so I'll take that. I played good today. I putted really good.'



Brooks Koepka of the United States and caddy Ricky Elliott walk to the 17th tee during the second round of the Tour Championship at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta.

AFP
Atlanta

World number one Brooks Koepka birdied the 18th hole Friday, capping a three-under-par 67 to take a one-shot lead over Justin Thomas and Rory McIlroy in the US PGA Tour Championship. Koepka posted his second straight 67 at East Lake in Atlanta, Georgia. Under the "staggered start" format by which players were spotted strokes based on their

position in the playoff standings, that put him on 13-under par — one stroke in front of American Thomas and Northern Ireland star McIlroy. McIlroy capped his 67 with back-to-back birdies, including a bravura finish at 18 where he was in the trees off the tee. He used a five-wood to fire out and ended up with a good lie in the rough between two bunkers near the green. "I felt comfortable doing it," McIlroy said. "I made a four off a bad tee shot, so I'm not complaining." Thomas — who went into

the tournament as the top seed, awarded a two-stroke edge after his win in the BMW Championship — was alone atop the leaderboard at 13- under through 16 holes but slipped back with a bogey at 17 and finished with a two-under 68. Koepka who started the week three shots off the lead, couldn't get his eight-foot eagle putt to drop at the last, but he tapped in for his fourth birdie of the day. "I mean, the lead's always nice, so I'll take that," Koepka said. "I played good today. I putted really good. Short game was pretty solid."

Koepka had three straight birdies at the sixth, seventh and eighth, but like most he struggled on a tough back nine after a weather delay. "The rain delay kind of killed any momentum I had," he said. "I didn't feel like I had any good golf shots after the rain delay, but that's part of golf. Everybody's got to deal with the same thing. I just didn't execute." Thomas also had three front-nine birdies, but he was one-over on the back. He, too, said he "kind of had a hard time getting back into it" after the delay. "But if I continue to drive it like

I did today, I feel like I can really do some damage this weekend," Thomas said. "I just have to realize that I played really well today." American Xander Schauffele was alone in fourth, his eagle at 18 giving him a 69 that put him two shots off the lead. Thomas said the day "felt more normal" after the oddity of arriving at the first tee of the tournament on Thursday already credited with a two-shot lead. The new format is designed to ensure that whoever wins the season finale will also claim the cumulative FedEx Cup playoff title and its \$15mm top prize.

MOTORCYCLING

Marquez on pole at Silverstone

AFP
Silverstone, United Kingdom

World champion Marc Marquez secured pole for the British MotoGP with a track record time at Silverstone yesterday as French rookie Fabio Quartararo's fortune ran out. Quartararo shone in the first three practice sessions, with the 20-year-old on Yamaha's SRT satellite bike clocking a track record time on the freshly laid surface and lowering his own mark again in third free practice. But in fourth free practice and then final qualifying, Marquez for Honda stole the show with a new fastest time of one minute and 58.168 seconds. The Spaniard, starting from pole for the fourth consecutive race, is joined on the front row on Sunday by Italian veteran Valentino Rossi. The seven-time MotoGP world champion pushed his factory Yamaha to within 0.428sec of Marquez with the pair joined at the head of British grid by Australian Jack Miller on Ducati's Pramac. Free-practice trailblazer Quartararo had to settle for fourth, and the second row, after his effort of 1min 58.612sec.

Marquez leads the MotoGP championship standings by 58 points from Andrea Dovizioso, who sets off from the third row after placing seventh in qualifying. But the 26-year-old is by no means taking a seventh win of the season for granted after his 60th pole in the top division. "With this surface and perfect conditions the race will be very physical and demanding," said Marquez. "Yamaha are riding a good wave and they'll be the main opposition." One man who may beg to differ on that analysis is Yamaha's legend Rossi, who had his maiden qualifying lap cancelled for exceeding track limits. "I'm very, very happy," said the father of the MotoGP pack, the 40-year-old starting from the front row for the first time since Austin in April. "My pace is quite good, I had some traffic and had to wait and had to do everything in one go, it was a great lap." "I'm hoping now for good weather," he said of a race that was cancelled 12 months ago due to standing water on the circuit. The British crowd's hopes of local favourite Cal Crutchlow taking pole evaporated when he slid off his Honda.



Repsol Honda's Marc Marquez in action yesterday.

LPGA

Same-again Larsen edges clear in Toronto

AFP
Toronto

Denmark's Nicole Broch Larsen delivered a second consecutive six-under-par 66 to open up a one-shot lead at the halfway stage of the LPGA Tour's Canadian Pacific Women's Open on Friday. Larsen, chasing her first LPGA Tour victory, carded eight birdies in another low-scoring day at Magna Golf Club near Toronto. Two bogeys on the 4th and 15th holes prevented the 26-year-old from opening up a bigger lead heading into the weekend. Larsen, who is at 12 under, is one stroke clear of South Korea's Ko Jin-young, who posted a five-under-par 67 to finish the day at 11 under. China's Liu Yu is tied for third place alongside Canadian defending champion Brooke Henderson, and Thailand's Pajaree Anannarukarn, all on nine under. Amy Olson of the United States is in sole possession of sixth place on the leaderboard after a four-under-par 68 left her at eight under, a shot clear of four players tied on seven under. Larsen meanwhile said she had been liberated from the pressure of trying to force her way onto Europe's team for next month's Solheim Cup showdown with the United States.



"I didn't make the team either this year, and when that's announced I seem to play a lot better," Larsen said. "It's been a big goal of mine to make it. I definitely put a lot of pressure on myself. I really want to make that team." Larsen meanwhile is hoping to build on her experience from 2017, when she led in Canada after three rounds but could only shoot even par on the final day to miss out on victory. "I can definitely learn from two years ago when I was in this position," she said. "I'm just going to see if I can play as free as possible." Elsewhere on Friday, 12-year-old schoolgirl Michelle Liu's tournament ended with a 10-over-par 82, which left her at 19 over following her nine-over-par first round. "It was definitely a great experience," the Canadian youngster said. "I think it'll really help me moving forward and in other tournaments."

BOTTOMLINE

Chair umpire Ramos has lasting impact on US Open

Reuters
New York

Until last year's US Open, few tennis fans could identify a tournament official by name. That changed during the 2018 women's final when chair umpire Carlos Ramos shot to prominence after a seismic clash with Serena Williams. A year on from the tense decider won 6-2, 6-4 by Naomi Osaka, opinion remains deeply divided over how Ramos handled the match and the heated exchanges with Williams, one of the game's greatest players. This much is undisputed: Ramos issued three code-of-conduct violations against the American, starting with a warning for receiving coaching from her mentor Patrick Mouratoglou in the stands. The second resulted in a point penalty after Williams smashed and broke her racket in frustration. The third, a game penalty, was the culmination of an extended and intense argument in which Williams called Ramos a "liar" and a "thief". She was later fined \$17,000. While Osaka became the first tennis player born in Japan to win a Grand Slam title, denying Williams a record-equalling 24th in the process, her triumph was soured as disgruntled fans booed during the trophy ceremony.



In this file photo taken on September 8, 2018, Serena Williams of the US argues with umpire Carlos Ramos during her US Open final against Naomi Osaka of Japan.

Chair umpires barely rate a mention in normal media coverage of tennis, but Ramos's intervention generated global headlines and condemnation from some former players. Former US Open champion Andy Roddick tweeted: "Worst refereeing I've ever seen... the worst!!!" In her Washington Post column, sports columnist Sally Jenkins articulated what many fans saw as a sexist motivation behind Ramos's strict adherence to the rule book. "Ramos took what began as a mi-

nor infraction and turned it into one of the nastiest and most emotional controversies in the history of tennis, all because he couldn't take a woman speaking sharply to him," she wrote. Portuguese Ramos, among the most experienced officials in the sport, also had vocal support from colleagues. The International Tennis Federation issued a statement shortly after the final that said he had stuck to the rules and "acted at all times with professionalism and integrity." Before becoming an umpire, Ramos was a player

but not one whose abilities could indulge his interests. "I realised that as a player it would be very difficult to get where I wanted to go," Ramos said in a 2015 interview with Portuguese newspaper Observador. "I was very interested in languages, travel, interacting with people from other countries and cultures. And as a tennis player, I could not have that. In officiating, I saw that door open quickly." The multilingual 48-year-old now lives in France with his wife and family and has continued umpiring, including at the Grand Slams as well as Davis Cup and Fed Cup matches. While he has stayed away from the spotlight the past year, he continues to be front of mind for tournament officials. Rather than risk another confrontation, the United States Tennis Association has said Ramos will not officiate any of Williams's matches or those of her sister Venus. Officials said the decision was not prompted by requests from either of the Williams sisters. Officials also said that, for the first time, code violations will be posted on the tournament's scoreboards as they occur for clarity. Ramos has not been stopped from officiating Osaka's matches despite the furore over last year's final. When asked if she would mind seeing him on court with her again, Osaka said: "I never really say that I don't like an umpire... if it happens, it happens."

TENNIS

Big Three 'almost impossible' to beat at US Open

The trio have combined to win each of the last 11 Grand Slams

Reuters
New York

Roger Federer, Rafa Nadal and Novak Djokovic have enjoyed a years-long stranglehold on Grand Slam titles and that dominance is unlikely to end at the US Open where a cast of hopefuls will try to end their reign.

The 'Big Three' have combined to win each of the last 11 Grand Slams, with Serb Djokovic having triumphed in four of the last five blue riband events and a popular pick to successfully defend his New York title despite being dealt a tough draw.

ESPN tennis analyst and former world number one John McEnroe fully expects one member of the threesome to triumph in New York and suggested that the task of toppling them in a best-of-five sets is currently too tall an order.

"You have to beat potentially at least two of them, in some cases three of them. That's seemingly almost impossible to do," McEnroe said on a conference call.

"Perhaps with a little bit of luck something happens where a draw opens up. They're human. At some stage they're going to start losing more." Top seed Djokovic will begin his title defence against Roberto Carballes Baena, and before a projected semi-final clash with five-times winner Federer could meet former champion Stan Wawrinka or 2017 finalist Kevin Anderson in the fourth round.

One player who is widely considered a possible threat is Russian fifth seed Daniil Medvedev, who has proven to be the most in-form player in the lead-up to the US Open and is Djokovic's projected quarter-final opponent.

Medvedev has never made it past the third round in New York but is more confident than ever after reaching the final in tune-up events in Washington and Montreal before securing the biggest title of his career in Cincinnati.

"The three weeks really pushed my confidence a lot," said Medvedev, who has beaten Djokovic twice this season. "Now I know

"This is probably the best I've felt in years coming into the US Open again, which is encouraging"

that when I play my best tennis I can beat basically everybody, and that's what I need to keep doing here."

Federer, owner of a record 20 Grand Slam titles, considers himself in fine form despite a forgettable US Open tune-up that consisted of a swift third-round upset in Cincinnati. The 38-year-old Swiss third seed has played just two matches since last month's Wimbledon final, where he failed to convert two championship points on his own serve in the fifth set against Djokovic, but is raring to go.

"This is probably the best I've felt in years coming into the US Open again, which is encouraging," said Federer.

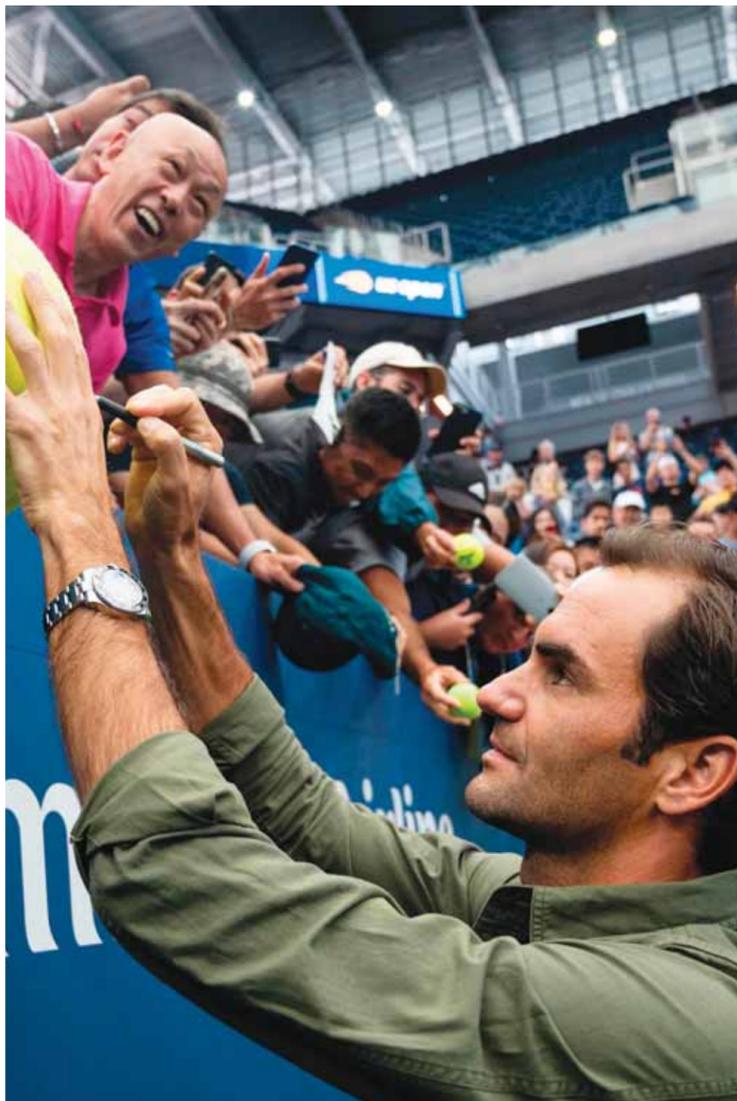
"It's going to be a tough tournament to win, no doubt about it. I feel like I'm part of that group who can do it."

Three-times champion Nadal, whose title defence at last year's US Open ended with him retiring from the semi-finals with a knee injury, has also declared himself ready for battle.

The Spanish second seed has been drawn in the opposite half of rivals Djokovic and Federer and his biggest hurdle to the final could be fourth seed Austrian Dominic Thiem, who is his projected semi-final opponent.

Nadal, who will strive for efficiency in a bid to limit the punishment the hardcourts can inflict on his troublesome knees, may appear to have the easier path of 'Big Three' to the final but was not about to acknowledge as much.

"I have to win my matches to have an advantage because I only can meet them in the semi-finals," said Nadal. "I have plenty of work before that to know if I have an advantage or not. So let's see if I am able to do my work for my side."



Roger Federer of Switzerland signs autographs after a press conference prior to the US Open at USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York City.

BADMINTON

Sindhu reaches third successive World C'ships final

IANS
Basel

For the third year in a row, ace India shuttler P V Sindhu stormed into the finals of BWF World Championships, defeating China's Chen Yu Fei in straight games.

The Rio Olympic silver medalist took 40 minutes to outclass World No 3 Yu Fei 21-7, 21-14.

Sindhu looked sharp and focused from the very first game itself while Yu Fei lacked pace as the Indian shuttler took just 15 minutes to take the first game.

Sindhu continued to dominate the Chinese shuttler in the second game. However, Yu Fei showed some fight in the second game as compared to the one-sided first game. But it wasn't enough to stop the Indian as she took the second game to enter the finals.

Sindhu will now take on Japan's Nozomi Okuhara in the final after she defeated Thailand's Ratchanok Itanon.

Sindhu said: "Yes, I am happy but the final is still left. This game was good and I took lead from the very beginning and maintained it till the end. I know it is not going to be easy and so, I have to go back and prepare for it." In the past, Chinese shuttlers had dominated the sport, but Sindhu has broken their hold, outsmarting them several times. When asked about it, Sindhu said: "I am happy to beat them. But as I said, every player has their own style of play and when it comes to Chinese shuttlers, one needs to be very much prepared. Yu Fei is also one of them

but as we regularly compete with each other in various tournaments, we know each other well."

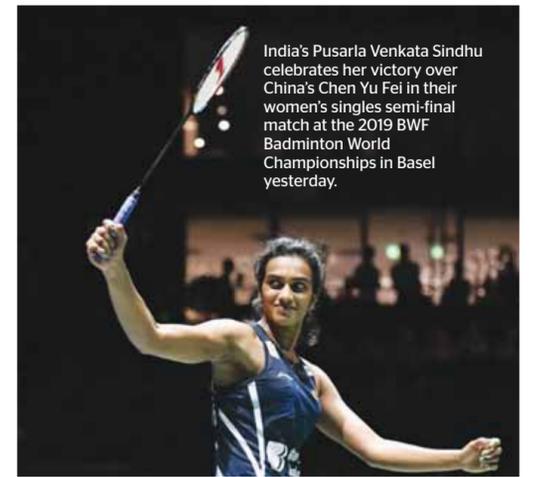
Meanwhile, India's Sai Praneeth's dream run came to an end with a 13-21, 8-21 loss to Japanese World No 1 Kento Momota in the semis. Praneeth kept pace with the defending champion for much of the first game, but Momota switched gears in the second and left the 27-year-old Indian reeling.

There was little to separate the two before the interval of the first game. Praneeth fluctuated between defence and attack and hardly made an unforced error which meant that Momota was holding a slender lead of 11-10 in the first game.

Momota started to assert himself after that and Praneeth started making a succession of unforced errors. Praneeth could only take two more points after resumption as Momota took the first game 21-13.

Praneeth was completely out of his depth in the second game with Momota relentlessly ticking away the points. The Indian started making a number of errors and by the time the interval came, Praneeth's body language showed that he had resigned to his fate. Momota led 11-3 at the interval. Praneeth took just five more points and lost the second game 8-12.

Praneeth said that it was the unforced errors after the interval in the first game that brought his downfall. "I lost my rhythm after making four-five mistakes continuously after the break. He was also able to pick up all my attacks so I just blanked out," he told IANS.



India's Pulara Venkata Sindhu celebrates her victory over China's Chen Yu Fei in their women's singles semi-final match at the 2019 BWF Badminton World Championships in Basel yesterday.

US OPEN FACTS AND FIGURES

Following are facts and records ahead of the 139th edition of the US Open, which begins on Monday.

PRIZE MONEY
Men's/women's singles winner: \$3.85mn
Men's/women's singles runner-up: \$1.9mn
Total prize pot: \$57mn

SHOWCOURTS
Arthur Ashe Stadium
Capacity: 23,771
The stadium is named after Arthur Ashe who won the men's singles title at the inaugural US Open in 1968, the Australian Open in 1970, and Wimbledon in 1975.

Louis Armstrong Stadium
Capacity: 14,053
It was opened during the 2018 US Open to replace the 1978 stadium of the same name. It has a retractable roof, the largest of its kind among number two stadiums at Grand Slam venues.

Grandstand
Capacity: 8,125
The court made its debut on Aug 29, 2016, the first day of the 2016 US Open.

TOP SEEDS
Men's singles
1-Novak Djokovic (Serbia)
2-Rafa Nadal (Spain)
3-Roger Federer (Switzerland)

4-Dominic Thiem (Austria)
5-Daniil Medvedev (Russia)
6-Alexander Zverev (Germany)
7-Kei Nishikori (Japan)
8-Stefanos Tsitsipas (Greece)

Women's singles
1-Naomi Osaka (Japan)
2-Ash Barty (Australia)
3-Karolina Pliskova (Czech Republic)
4-Simona Halep (Romania)
5-Elina Svitolina (Ukraine)
6-Petra Kvitova (Czech Republic)
7-Kiki Bertens (Netherlands)
8-Serena Williams (US)

MOST CHAMPIONSHIP TITLES
Men's singles

Before 1968
7 - Bill Tilden (US), William Larned (US), Richard Sears (US)

Open Era
5 - Roger Federer (Switzerland), Pete Sampras (US), Jimmy Connors (US)

Women's singles
Before 1968
8 - Molla Mallory (US)

Open Era
6 - Serena Williams (US), Chris Evert (US)

YOUNGEST CHAMPION
Men's singles - Pete Sampras (US) (1990): Aged 19 years, 28 days

Women's singles - Tracy Austin (US) (1979): Aged 16 years, 8 months, 28 days

OLDEST CHAMPION
Men's singles - William Larned (US) (1911): Aged 38 years, 8 months, 3 days
Women's singles - Molla Mallory (US) (1926): Aged 42 years, 5 months, 27 days

SERVING RECORDS
Most aces in a tournament (since 1991)

Men's singles
144 - Pete Sampras (US) in 2002
Women's singles
70 - Serena Williams (US) in 1999

BOTTOMLINE

Serena-Sharapova and Federer play Monday night

AFP
New York

Serena Williams and Maria Sharapova will meet in Monday night's first feature match at the US Open with 20-time Grand Slam champion Roger Federer following them on Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Schedules for the first two days of the year's final Grand Slam were released yesterday by the US Tennis Association following the completion of qualifying matches.

Eighth-seeded American Williams,

trying to capture her 24th Grand Slam singles title to match the all-time record held by Margaret Court, has a 19-2 record against the Russian, a five-time Grand Slam winner. Following the dramatic night opener will be third-seeded Federer against India's Sumit Nagal.

Monday's day session begins with reigning French Open champion Ashleigh Barty, the second seed from Australia, facing Zarina Diyas of Kazakhstan.

Top-ranked defending champion Novak Djokovic launches his bid for his fifth title in six Grand Slam events after that against Spaniard Roberto Carballa Baena.

Monday's schedule at Louis Armstrong

Stadium includes Czech third seed Karolina Pliskova, chasing her first major title, against compatriot Tereza Martincova, India's Prajnesh Gunneswaran against Russian fifth seed Daniil Medvedev and China's Zheng Saisai against seven-time Grand Slam winner Venus Williams.

Tuesday's schedule was also revealed with top-seeded defending women's champion Naomi Osaka of Japan in the opener on Arthur Ashe Stadium against Russia's Anna Blinkova.

Austrian fourth seed Dominic Thiem meets Italy's Thomas Fabbiano in the next match. Spanish second seed Rafael Nadal opens the night session against Austral-

ian John Millman, who upset Federer in last year's first round, with 2017 US Open winner Sloane Stephens, the US 11th seed, facing Russia's Anna Kalinskaya.

US 15-year-old Coco Gauff, in the event on a wildcard after a run to the fourth round at Wimbledon in her Slam singles debut, opens against Russia's Anastasia Potapova on Louis Armstrong Stadium.

Other Tuesday matches there find Greek eighth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas against Russia's Andrey Rublev and Romanian fourth seed Simona Halep, who beat Serena Williams in last month's Wimbledon final, facing American Nicole Gibbs.

Nadal fit and ready for hardcourt challenge

Reuters
New York

Rafa Nadal was forced out of the US Open last year in the semi-finals with a knee injury but the in-form Spaniard on Friday declared himself fit and ready for the punishing hardcourts at Flushing Meadows. Nadal's hopes of defending his 2017 US Open title last year were crushed when his chronic knee issues forced him to retire while trailing Juan Martin del Potro 7-6(3) 6-2 after a number of long and gruelling matches.

Yet Nadal, whose US Open tune-up this year featured a victory in Montreal, where he earned a record-extending 35th ATP Masters 1000 title, arrives at the year's final Grand Slam feeling much better about his health.

"My feeling on the knees are better this year than last year. Last year the problem was I played three or four very, very long matches. That's tough," Nadal said during a US Open Media Day inside Louis Armstrong Stadium. "I hope to be ready for it. I think I am playing well. I am practising the right way during these days. Of course, winning in Montreal helps. I am ready for the action." Those are encouraging words for Nadal, who last



year showed signs of distress almost from the start of his semi-final as he limped noticeably, grimaced with every sudden move and called for the trainer during a changeover in the second set.

The 33-year-old Spaniard, who cited fatigue as his reason for skipping a US Open warm-up in Cincinnati after winning in Montreal, said he has been focused on arriving in New York and adapting to the conditions.

Nadal, who would move to within one Grand Slam of Roger Federer's all-time record 20 with a triumph in New York, said he has practised well all week and is brimming with confidence. "My last events have been win Rome, win in Roland Garros, semi-finals in Wimbledon, and winning Montreal," said Nadal. "That's a positive feeling, positive memory on my mind. That helps for the confidence, helps for the positive feelings."