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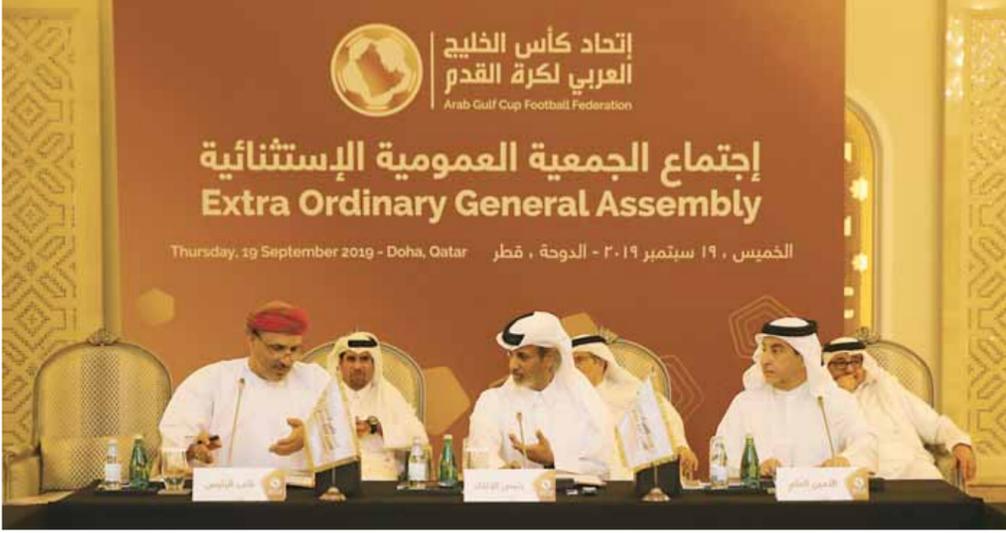
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**FOOTBALL**

# Arab Gulf Cup to be held in Doha from Nov 27-Dec 9

Members can confirm participation till the official draw for the competition



HE Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani (centre), president of Qatar Football Association and Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation (AGCFF), chaired the extraordinary general assembly meeting of the AGCFF yesterday.

**By Sports Reporter**  
Doha

**H**E Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani, president of Qatar Football Association (QFA) and Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation (AGCFF), chaired the extraordinary general assembly meeting of the AGCFF yesterday.

The meeting was attended by AGCFF vice-president Jassim al-Shakili, general secretary Jassim al-Rumaihi and assistant general secretary Ahmed al-Nuaimi, in addition to the representatives from the member associations of Oman, Kuwait, Iraq, Yemen and Qatar.

A number of important decisions were taken at the meeting, including the confirmation that the 24th edition of the Arab Gulf Cup would be held in Doha from November 27 to December 9, 2019, with the minimum number of teams, as per the

amendments made to the competition regulations during the 11th meeting of the AGCFF executive committee.

The attendees also approved the nominations for the members of the AGCFF legal committees, in addition to delaying the adoption of proposed amendments to AGCFF statutes until the next meeting which will be held in Doha during the 24th Arab Gulf Cup.

Also, the Iraq Football Association put forward their application to host the next edition of the tournament, which was welcomed by all the member associations. The bid will be studied before the official confirmation is made on the matter.

Sheikh Hamad stated that the door will remain open for the other member associations, who have not yet confirmed their participation in the 24th Arab Gulf Cup, until the official draw for the competition.

At the end of the meeting, he thanked the attendees and extended his best wishes for the successful organisation of the upcoming tournament, with the participation of all the members.



**ATHLETICS**

# IAAF confirms 1,900-plus entries for world championships

**IAAF World Athletics Championships DOHA 2019**  
بطولة العالم لألعاب القوى - الدوحة

**Reuters**  
Bengaluru

**M**ore than 1,900 athletes from 209 countries will be in action at this month's World Athletics Championships, with American sprinter Allyson Felix looking to extend her record medals tally in Doha.

The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) confirmed 1,928 entries in a provisional list released yesterday for the event, which runs from Sept 27 until Oct 6.

All 30 of the Diamond League champions have confirmed participation, while 38 individual winners from the London cham-

pionships two years ago will defend their titles in Doha.

Felix, the world championships' most decorated athlete, with 16 medals, was named in the US team for the ninth consecutive time and will feature in the 4x400m relay squad.

Men's 100m favourite Christian Coleman and reigning world champion Justin Gatlin were also selected in a 143-member US team.

Spain's Jesus Angel Garcia, 49, will extend his own record number of appearances at the championships to 13 when he takes to the starting line for the 50km race walk on Sept 28.

The 1993 world champion will also become the oldest participant to take part in the championships.

## Qatar remain top of the Asian Arab teams in latest FIFA rankings

The Qatari national football team maintained its leadership of Arab teams in Asia, in the FIFA ranking for September released yesterday. Qatar was also fifth in the continent, behind Iran, Japan, South Korea, and Australia. Qatar is currently ranked 62nd worldwide. The top 10 teams are Belgium, France, Brazil, England, Portugal, Uruguay, Spain, Croatia, Colombia, and Argentina.

## Al Gharafa arrive in Jordan for Arab Handball Super Cup

Al Gharafa handball team arrived in Amman yesterday to play the Handball Arab Super Cup against Tunisia's Esperance ST on Sunday. Al Gharafa will play the final as the 14th Arab Championship of Clubs Cup Winners in Sfax, Tunisia, after beating Libya's Al Ittihad 29-27. Esperance, meanwhile, won the Arab Champions League title in its 34th edition, which was also held in the same city last year by defeating Sakiet El Zeit 36-29. Al Gharafa will also participate after the Arab Super Cup match in the 35th Arab Handball League Championship, which will be held in Amman from September 23 until October 3. Qatar SC team will also take part in the tournament.

**BOTTOMLINE**

# QOC secretary-general praises sponsors of Beach Games

**By Sports Reporter**  
Doha

**Q**atar Olympic Committee (QOC) Secretary-General Jassim Rashid al-Buenain has praised sponsors of the ANOC World Beach Games Qatar 2019.

The Local Organising Committee (LOC) of the event announced the official sponsors for the event at a press conference held at Katara - the Cultural Village yesterday.

Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) has been named the official partner of the Games while Katara - the Cultural Village and Aspire Zone are the Official Venue Partners. The Official Spon-

sors are Baladna, Mowasalat and Bornan. The Official Suppliers include Xtreme, Elan, Ooredoo and Al Rawda while Qatar National Tourism Council has been announced as a major stakeholder of the event.

Commenting on the occasion, LOC Director General and QOC Secretary-General al-Buenain said, "It is our pleasure to partner with our various sponsors for this historical event. It's so exciting to see so many of Qatar's organisations come together to create a truly unique and world-class event in Qatar."

The ANOC World Beach Games Qatar 2019, which will be held from October 12-16 in Doha, is an inaugural international beach multi-sport event

organized by the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC).

"ANOC World Beach Games Qatar 2019 offers us the opportunity to showcase once again our passion for sports as a nation and our wonderful hospitality as a great host. I believe the event will not only promote the values of ANOC but also foster unity and cooperation among the participating countries. We thank our sponsors for joining us in our journey towards creating history and for their immeasurable support towards making the Games a resounding success," al-Buenain added.

More than 1,200 athletes from a total of 96 National Olympic Committees (NOCs), represent-

ing all the five continents, will be competing in 14 disciplines across 13 sports at the event.

The featuring sports include aquathlon, 3X3 basketball, climbing bouldering, beach handball, karate kata individual, kitefoil racing, skateboarding, beach soccer, open water 5km swimming, beach tennis, beach volleyball 4X4, waterski, wakeboard and beach wrestling.

The event is scheduled for five days with the opening rounds for certain events being held on 11 October, the day before the opening ceremony on 12 October. The ANOC General Assembly and ANOC Awards 2019 will be held on October 17-18, following the close of the competition.



Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) Secretary-General Jassim Rashid al-Buenain.

## PREVIEW

# Al Sadd back in league action after nailing ACL semis spot

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

Fresh from their AFC Champions League exploits, Al Sadd will be back in action in the QNB Stars League today when they take on Umm Salal at Al Janoub Stadium.

Earlier this week, Al Sadd ousted Saudi Arabia's Al Nassr to advance to the semi-finals of the continental event as they continued their domination of regional club rivals.

The defending Qatar champions already have two wins in as many matches and would be keen to maintain a clean slate under new coach Xavi.

Umm Salal, on the other hand,

have just one point, from a 2-2 draw against Al Rayyan, having lost successive matches against Al Khor and Al Arabi later.

Al Sadd's victories were against Al Wakrah (4-1) and Al Shahania (7-1). Xavi's men have played one game less as their match against Al Saliya in Week 3 was postponed to September 24.

Umm Salal will be keen on registering their first victory. It is also a chance for them to avoid a hat-trick of defeats that will dent the morale of their players.

In today's second match, Al Saliya and Qatar SC will be desperate for points.

Al Saliya, who finished a creditable third in the 2018-19 QNB Stars League, could not make a strong start this time around and have collected only

a point, from their drawn encounter (1-1) with Al Khor in the opening round.

The Peregrines lost the next game 0-3 to Al Ahli.

However, Al Saliya, under Tunisian Sami Trabelsi for long, have played one game less as their match against Al Sadd in Week 3 was postponed.

Qatar SC, coached by Spaniard Carlos Alos Ferrer, have yet to open their account, having lost 1-2 to Al Duhail, 0-2 to Al Wakrah and 1-3 to Al Gharafa.

The Kings had raised visions of victory against Al Duhail, but conceded two late goals to throw away the lead.

So both sides, who have players of calibre, will look for their first victory, which will help them get their campaign on track.



Al Sadd coach Xavi (left) celebrates with his staff after his team's 3-1 AFC Champions League quarter-final win over Saudi's Al Nassr at the Jassim bin Hamad Stadium in Doha on Monday. (AFP)

## FOCUS

# Al Arabi, Gharafa post QSL victories

El Neel scored for Al Arabi in 2-1 win over Shahania; Gharafa beat Ahli 3-1

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

Al Arabi defeated Al Shahania 2-1 in Week 4 of the 2019-20 QNB Stars League at the Al Janoub Stadium yesterday.

Mohamed Salah El Neel (first minute and 89th minute) scored for Al Arabi. Al Shahania's goal was scored by Ramin Rezaeian in the 74th minute through a penalty.

In what was an early shock for Al Shahania, El Neel quickly finished off a move that literally originated from the kick-off.

The striker latched on to a long pass after Khalifa al-Dosari misjudged the flight of the ball that went over Al Shahania goalkeeper's head one bounce and applied the finishing touch.

Al Shahania had to be credited for putting the early heartbreak behind them and giving Al Arabi a good fight in the first half, where their best chance came when Kesse Amangoua came up with a long-ranger, which rival goalkeeper Gregory Gomis parried.

Soon after restart, Al Shahania's Abdelaziz Barrada headed wide.

The match gathered steam then. After Al Arabi's Hamdi Harbaoui's weak shot that went wide of the post, Al Shahania's Rezaeian struck a powerful shot, which Gomis saved.

Then came the equaliser when Rezaeian converted from the penalty spot.

After Khalifa thwarted Al Arabi's Yousef Abdurizag's shot, El Neel netted the winner from close range to seal full points for The Dream Team.

Al Arabi have 10 points from



Al Arabi's Morteza Janpour (left) in action during the QNB Stars League match against Al Shahania at the Al Janoub Stadium yesterday. PICTURE: Noushad Thekkayil

four games, having drawn one and won three.

In the second match of the day, Al Gharafa defeated Al Ahli

3-1.

Al Ahli took the lead against the run of play through Abdelrahman Moustafa in the 11th

minute, only to see Al Gharafa make a brilliant comeback.

Sofianne Hanni (47th minute) and Ahmed Alaaeldin (76th

minute) scored for Al Gharafa, who were also helped by an own goal by Majed Mohammed in the 77th minute.

The red card to Mohamed al-Abbasi in the 73rd minute made matters worse for Al Ahli as they conceded two more goals since then.

Al Gharafa took their points tally to 10 with their third victory, having defeated Al Shahania (3-0) and Qatar SC (3-1). The Cheetahs drew goalless with Al Rayyan in their other game.

Al Gharafa are now equal with Al Arabi on 10 points.

The result ended Al Ahli's two-match winning run. The Brigadiers had lost 1-3 to Al Ahli in the first round, but then defeated Al Saliya 3-0 and Al Khor 3-2 to be on six points.

Al Gharafa had more of the exchanges throughout the game, the highlight fixture in Week 4 of the QNB Stars League.

However, Al Ahli took a surprise lead when Abdelrahman Moustafa latched on to a long pass from the middle by Mohammed Diamy and evaded Hector Moreno before slotting the ball home past Al Gharafa goalkeeper Qasim Burhan.

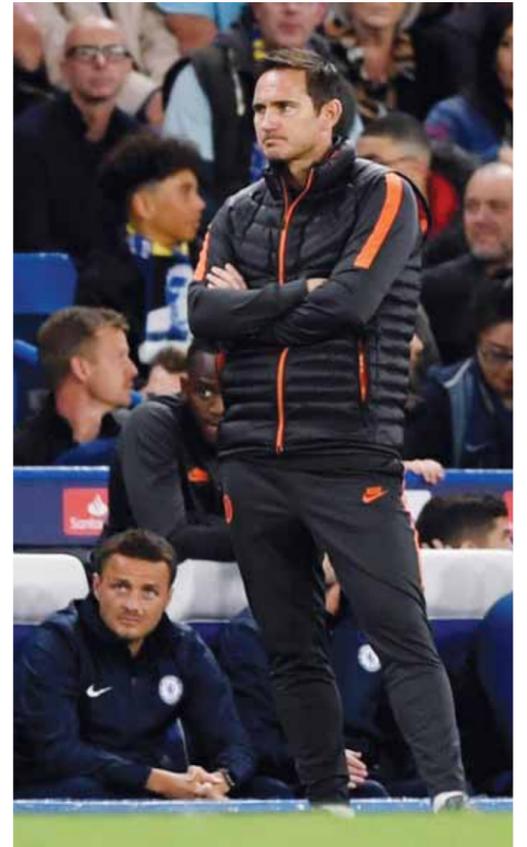
Al Gharafa had Koo Ja-Cheol's rising shot that hit the crossbar to show for their efforts in the first half.

Hanni helped Al Gharafa draw parity before long after resumption but, since then, there were a spate of attacks by Al Gharafa, with Adlene Guedioura, Hanni and Alaaeldin leading the charge.

Alaaeldin then found the mark himself and was instrumental in their third goal as Majed hit the former's goal-bound shot home in a bid to clear the ball.

## PREMIER LEAGUE

# Big test for Lampard and his youngsters as Klopp's Liverpool visit Chelsea



Chelsea manager Frank Lampard looks on during the UEFA Champions League match against Valencia at Stamford Bridge in London on Tuesday. (Reuters)

Reuters  
Manchester, England

Frank Lampard's young Chelsea side face a major test of their progress when they face Liverpool at Stamford Bridge in the Premier League on Sunday.

Last week's impressive 5-2 win at Wolverhampton Wanderers showed Chelsea's potential with striker Tammy Abraham grabbing a hat-trick and two other academy products in Mason Mount and Fikayo Tomori also on target.

But it has been a mixed start to the season for Lampard's side and they have been particularly patchy at home — giving up a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 with promoted Sheffield United and losing 1-0 in the Champions League to Spanish club Valencia.

Liverpool also tasted defeat in Europe with a 2-0 loss to Napoli in Italy but Jurgen Klopp's men lead the Premier League with five wins from five.

The match is Chelsea's biggest test since their opening day 4-0 loss at Manchester United and Abraham believes they will be fired up.

"Sunday is a test of character. We can take our anger out against Liverpool after the European disappointment," he said.

"It's a massive game and both teams will be going to win. We'll look forward to putting (the Valencia loss) right," Abraham added.

"We are going to have a lot of ups and downs in a season. We've got to move on and not dwell on it."

Liverpool defender Virgil van Dijk, who made a rare error for Napoli's second goal, brushed off the notion that the loss was a wake-up call for the European champions.

"It shouldn't be a wake-up call — we have been performing outstanding since the start of the season and so there is no reason to panic," he said.

Liverpool were held to a draw at Stamford Bridge last season, needing a late equaliser from Daniel Sturridge to take a point. The previous season Chelsea won 1-0 with a goal from Olivier Giroud.

Champions Manchester City, beaten at promoted Norwich City last weekend will expect to get back to winning ways when they host Watford at the Etihad on Saturday.

Pep Guardiola is without his two first-choice central defenders after John Stones joined Aymeric Laporte on the injury list.

Brazilian Fernandinho partnered Nicolas Otamendi in the 3-0 Champions League win at Shakhtar Donetsk in Ukraine on Wednesday but 18-year-old Spanish defender Eric Garcia could be in contention for a start against the Hornets.

Fourth-placed Manchester United travel to West Ham United on Sunday while Tottenham Hotspur, who are third, face a tricky trip to Leicester City.

## BOTTOMLINE

# Henry deserves to coach in the Premier League, says Pires

Reuters  
London

Arsenal great Thierry Henry is ready for another shot at management after being dumped by Monaco in January and deserves to be in the Premier League, according to former team mate Robert Pires.

Henry lasted three months in the principality, the 42-year-old World Cup winner was dismissed in January after winning only four of his 20 games in charge and with the club threatened by relegation.

The former striker worked before that as assistant coach to the Belgian national team but had never been in charge of a team in his own right.

"I saw Thierry a few weeks ago

for the game against Tottenham at the Emirates and he's waiting. He's waiting for something, for the new challenge," Pires told Reuters at a Global Sports Week launch event at the French ambassador's residence in London on Wednesday evening.

"Some people say 'Yeah, but he was a mistake with Monaco.' I say no.

"When you start like this, like Thierry, if you have only three months it's so difficult to prove something. And specially at this moment. Monaco were so bad, it was so difficult, they had a lot of injuries."

Pires said Henry, who started out playing for Monaco and went on to enjoy a stellar club career with Arsenal and Barcelona, had lost none of his hunger or ambition.

"He told me it was a good ex-



In this January 14, 2006, picture, Arsenal's Robert Pires celebrates scoring a goal with teammate Thierry Henry during the Premiership match against Middlesbrough. (Reuters)

perience with Monaco. Unfortunately only three months. But

he's ready. He's ready for the new job and he's waiting for some-

thing," said the Frenchman. "I think he deserves to have the second chance, maybe in the Premier League."

The one club he could be sure to rule out, he added for the benefit of Arsenal fans, was their North London rivals Tottenham.

## ARSENAL AMBASSADOR

Pires, who was with Henry a member of France's 1998 World Cup-winning squad, retired from soccer in 2016 at the age of 42.

He won two Premier League titles and was part of an Arsenal side that won three FA Cups.

The former midfielder said he had no plans at present to follow his former team mate into management.

"For the moment, no. It's not in my plans. I think it's a great job, a fantastic job. but it's so dif-

ficult, so hard every day with the players, with the fans, with the media, with the owner," he said.

"For the moment I'm involved with Arsenal, like an ambassador, and believe me it's more relaxing and more quiet. For me it's perfect.

"I love Arsenal, I'm open to work with the first team, with (manager) Unai Emery maybe one day but for the moment it's not in the Arsenal plans and I respect the decision."

Of the current Gunners, Pires saw young French midfielder Matteo Guendouzi as a potential future captain and said the fans needed to allow time for new signing Nicolas Pepe to settle in.

The 24-year-old Ivory Coast forward, signed in August from Lille for an estimated club record fee of 72 million pounds (\$89.68 mn),

has yet to score and was criticised after Arsenal drew 2-2 at Watford last weekend.

"With Lille, he was fantastic. Last season he was one of the best players, he scored 21 or 22 goals," said Pires. "He's a great player."

"Now he's playing for Arsenal in the Premier League and he needs to adapt. It's so difficult, very tough. So I want to say to the fans you need to be patient with Pepe."

Pires said it was "a big shame" former Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger looked set for a technical role with world body FIFA rather than a return to club management.

"We need to respect his decision but one day we can see again Arsene Wenger on the bench. Where? I don't know. But as soon as possible," he said.

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

# PSG thrash Real in campaign opener as Man City cruise

'We have to play like this, in the league as well, with character and hunger'

AFP  
Paris, France

Paris Saint-Germain launched their latest quest for Champions League success with a statement win over Real Madrid on Wednesday, while a late Atletico Madrid comeback foiled Juventus as Manchester City eased to victory in Ukraine.

French giants PSG have failed to make their mark in Europe, crashing out of the Champions League in the last 16 each of the past three years despite the huge sums of money spent by their Qatari owners.

With Neymar suspended and Kylian Mbappe and Edinson Cavani sidelined by injury, Angel Di Maria stepped up in their absence by grabbing two first-half goals in a 3-0 triumph at the Parc des Princes.

Thomas Meunier added the third late on as Madrid, who beat PSG on the way to lifting the trophy in 2016 and 2018, were soundly beaten in their Group A opener with Eden Hazard kept quiet on his full debut.

"There's no message sent, but we dominated this game very well!" PSG captain Thiago Silva told RMC Sport.

"We have to play like this all the time, in the league as well, with character and hunger."

Real, the 13-time European champions, are still favourites to advance from a section that includes Club Brugge and Galatasaray, who drew 0-0 in Belgium, but the nature of the loss underscored the work that lies ahead for coach Zinedine Zidane.

"They were superior to us in everything they did, and in intensity, which annoys me the most," said the Frenchman.

Diego Simeone's Atletico clawed their way back from two goals down in the final 20 minutes to rescue a 2-2 draw at home to Juventus in Group D.



Paris Saint-Germain's Angel Di Maria (right) celebrates scoring a goal during the UEFA Champions League Group A match against Real Madrid at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris, France, yesterday. (AFP)

The anticipated clash between Cristiano Ronaldo and Joao Felix, the teenager touted as the heir to Ronaldo's throne, took a backseat to an Atletico rousing comeback after second-half goals from Juan Cuadrado and Blaise Matuidi put Juve in control.

Stefan Savic nodded home from point-blank range to give Atletico hope and substitute Hector Herrera headed in a corner in the final minute to snatch a point.

"I think we played well but we have a bitter taste in our mouth now because we felt we had the game in our hands," said Juventus boss Maurizio Sarri.

## STRONG RESPONSE FROM MAN CITY

Both sides trail Lokomotiv Moscow following the Russians' 2-1 win at Bayer Leverkusen. Grzegorz Krychowiak and Dmitri Barinov scored for Lokomotiv either side of an own goal by former Germany defender Benedikt Hoewedes.

Premier League champions City bounced back from defeat by Norwich at the weekend with a comfortable 3-0 victory against Shakhtar Donetsk in Kharkiv.

Riyad Mahrez slammed home a rebound after Ilkay Gundogan hit the post, and the German international smacked in a second

before Gabriel Jesus sealed the points on 76 minutes.

"When you win the manager makes the right decisions, when you lose the wrong decisions. We lost one game in eight months and we will not doubt who these players are. It is a joy to be their manager," coach Pep Guardiola told BT Sport.

City are second to Dinamo Zagreb in Group C after the Croatian champions made it a night to forget for competition debutants Atalanta with a 4-0 rout.

Dinamo failed to score a single goal as they lost all six matches on their last group stage appearance in 2016-17.

However, Marin Leovac gave them a 10th-minute lead and Mislav Orsic bagged a hat-trick as Dinamo got off to a dream start ahead of a trip to City on October 2.

Bayern Munich needed late goals from Robert Lewandowski and Thomas Mueller to make sure of victory against Red Star Belgrade in Group D.

Kingsley Coman's bullet header gave Bayern a first-half lead but the German champions were forced to wait until the 80th minute before Lewandowski ended Red Star's threat.

Substitute Mueller volleyed in a third in stoppage time.

## Zidane looking vulnerable as Real face Lopetegui reunion

Reuters  
Madrid, Spain

Julen Lopetegui's coaching reputation was on the line after his short-lived and painful tenure at Real Madrid but he has got off to a flying start in his new role with Sevilla and can serve his former employers a dish of revenge when they visit on Sunday.

Sevilla top La Liga with 10 points after four games and while Real are also unbeaten and only two points back, they are smarting from a humiliating 3-0 defeat to Paris St Germain in the Champions League which has coach Zinedine Zidane feeling the heat.

Lopetegui knows exactly what it is like to have the finger pointed at you for Real's failings.

He had the daunting task of inheriting

a team that had won three consecutive Champions League titles when he took over after Zidane resigned in 2018 and no sooner had he taken the job, the club sold all-time top scorer Cristiano Ronaldo.

Lopetegui had been in the spotlight after being sacked as Spain coach before the 2018 World Cup and despite a strong start at Real his team went on a run of seven games with only one win and he was sacked in October after a 5-1 thrashing at Barcelona.

"We had a good start, the team was playing well but then we had three very bad weeks," Lopetegui recalled.

"You just hope you have time to find a solution because these things can balance out over a season. We were sure this situation was going to pass. I wasn't given time."

Yet Real's fortunes did not improve after



Lopetegui left. His successor Santiago Solari lasted little more than four months and Zidane's second coming is not working out well: he has won seven out of 16 games since returning, losing five and drawing four. A 300-million-euro (\$332mn) injection

of new signings, including Eden Hazard, was supposed to rejuvenate the team but a mixture of injury problems and Zidane's preferences have led to him picking a familiar looking side but one lacking the spark of old.

Zidane is under renewed pressure after the resounding defeat to PSG, who were missing their three first-choice forwards, and former Real striker Predrag Mijatovic has blamed the Frenchman for the team's plight.

"The situation is worrying, the team need to improve in every aspect but I don't think Zidane is capable of coming up with anything to help them," he said. Elsewhere in La Liga, champions Barcelona visit Granada tomorrow and are set to hand Lionel Messi a first start of the season after he recovered from a calf injury, while second-placed Atletico Madrid host Celta Vigo.

EUROPA LEAGUE

# Arsenal run riot at Frankfurt as Emery rings changes

AFP  
Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Arsenal youngsters Joe Willock and Bukayo Saka claimed goals as a rotated Gunners side romped to a 3-0 win at 10-man Eintracht Frankfurt yesterday in the Europa League.

Willock, 20, one of seven changes by Arsenal manager Unai Emery to the team which started Sunday's 2-2 draw at Watford, gave the Gunners a first-half lead after a deflection off a Frankfurt player.

Then 18-year-old Saka and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang grabbed late goals as Frankfurt

were reduced to 10 men for the final 11 minutes when midfielder Dominik Kohr was shown a second yellow card and sent off for fouling Saka.

Last season's Europa League finalists Arsenal rebounded from throwing away a two-goal lead at Watford, with playmaker Mesut Ozil left out for the trip to Germany.

Club record signing Nicolas Pepe and midfielder Dani Ceballos made second-half appearances off the bench.

Aubameyang started up front flanked by teenager wingers Emile Smith Rowe, 19, and Saka.

**CELTIC DRAW WITH RENNES**  
Ryan Christie scored a second-

half penalty as Celtic kicked off their Europa League group-stage campaign with a battling 1-1 draw away to French Cup holders Rennes.

Christie's 59th-minute spot-kick cancelled out M'Baye Niang's penalty which had given Rennes the lead in the first half in Brittany in the Group E game.

The Scottish champions finished with 10 men as substitute Vakoun Issouf Bayo was sent off for two yellow cards in quick succession in injury time, but the result gives them a platform on which to build before their next match at home to CFR Cluj, who shocked Lazio 2-1 yesterday.



Arsenal's Joe Willock (third from right) celebrates scoring his goal with teammates during the Europa League match against Eintracht Frankfurt in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, yesterday. (AFP)

## Barcelona predict billion euro income this season

Barcelona expect to record revenues of more than one billion euros for the 2019-2020 season, becoming the first football club to pass the mark, the Catalan club announced yesterday. According to figures released ahead of the general meeting of their "socios" (supporters, shareholders) scheduled for October 6, Barca expect a revenue of 1.047bn euros (\$1.16bn) in the fiscal campaign just started, which is six percent more than last season when the club generated 990mn euros. "It's an historic record for a sports club, it's better than the NBA and NFL franchises and other football clubs," Barcelona managing director Oscar Grau told a news conference. Barcelona president Josep Maria Bartomeu had set a strategic goal of being the first outfit to reach the one billion euro mark by the end of his presidency in 2021.

## Spurs must improve on maintaining leads in games: Pochettino

Tottenham Hotspur must improve on maintaining in-game leads and managing the game better after throwing away a 2-0 lead in two of their last three matches, manager Mauricio Pochettino said yesterday. Spurs blew a 2-0 lead against arch rivals Arsenal in the 2-2 Premier League draw earlier this month and squandered a two-goal lead again on Wednesday in their Champions League opener at Olympiakos Piraeus to come away with only a point. "We need to improve in this type of situation... Leading 2-0 against Arsenal, leading 2-0 against Olympiakos," Pochettino told reporters ahead of tomorrow's trip to Leicester City. "I think we are not talking about quality, we are talking about in this type of situation managing the game better and dealing better with this type of situation."

## Football hate crime soars in England and Wales

Hate crime reports at football matches in England and Wales rose by almost 50 percent during the 2018-19 season compared to the previous campaign, government figures showed yesterday. Incidents of hate crime were reported at 193 matches between August 1, 2018 and July 31, 2019, a 47 percent rise from 131 matches the year before. The government report said that of those incidents, 79 percent related to race. It stated that the increase could be due to improvements in recording the data. Overall football-related arrests dropped by 10 percent to 1,381. Anti-discrimination charity Kick It Out said the figures were a "serious concern". "These figures should serve as a reminder for football. We must increase our efforts to send a clear message to any fan who discriminates at a match - you will be identified, arrested and face a football banning order."

## Bulgaria's record goalscorer Berbatov announces retirement

Former Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur striker Dimitar Berbatov announced his retirement from football yesterday, 18 months after leaving India's Kerala Blasters, bringing an end to a glittering 20-year career. The 38-year-old, Bulgaria's record goalscorer, also played for CSKA Sofia, Bayer Leverkusen, Fulham, Monaco and Greek side PAOK, but he has been without a club since leaving India's Kerala Blasters 18 months ago. "Someone told me I need to say something, and seeing that people were asking me, especially back home, I need to give a farewell message," Berbatov wrote on Instagram. "My last game was more than one year ago, so I think it's the right time now to stop, and its long overdue." Berbatov joined Manchester United from Tottenham in 2008 for what was then a club record fee of 30.75m pounds (\$38.38mn). He retired from international football in 2010 after scoring 48 goals in 79 matches.

## Snap judgment: fan who took selfie with Mbappe fined and banned

A football fan has been fined in France for running onto the field during a Ligue 1 game in Toulouse and taking a selfie with hero, Kylian Mbappe. The fan seized his photo opportunity in added time at the end of the first half on 31 March with the match still goalless. He has been fined 1,500 euros and banned from football grounds for six months, his lawyer, Mathieu Peter, told AFP yesterday. The prosecutor in Toulouse had requested a 500 euro fine and a one-year stadium ban. In France, "entering a sports stadium playground disrupting the conduct of the competition" carries a maximum punishment of one year in prison and a 15,000 euro fine. Peter said that his client, an "occasional" PSG supporter, had told the hearing that he wanted "a selfie and jersey" from Mbappe and ran on when he heard a whistle blow which he thought signalled the end of the half.

## Ballon d'Or organisers introduce goalkeeper award

A Ballon d'Or award for goalkeepers will be handed out for the first time this year, the organisers, *France Football* magazine, announced yesterday. The Yashin Trophy will be named after the Soviet international, Lev Yashin, the only goalkeeper to have won the Ballon d'Or itself. The Ballon d'Or for best male player was first awarded in 1956, to Stanley Matthews. It is voted on by journalists. Last year, an award for best female player was added. It was won by Norway's Ada Hegerberg. A shortlist for the prizes in the three categories will be announced on October 21. This year's winners will be revealed in a ceremony on December 2. The Ballon d'Or also served as the FIFA player of the year award from 2010-15 but was then replaced by the governing body's The Best awards in 2016.

## Iran to allow women to watch international football matches

Iranian women will be allowed into stadiums to watch the men's national team play football, the country's sports minister said yesterday. "All necessary preparations have been made so that women, initially however only for international games, can come into the football stadiums," sports minister Masoud Soltanifar wrote in a statement. At the Azadi Stadium in Tehran, where Iran play most of their matches and are due to host World Cup qualifiers from next month, separate entrances, stands and toilets have been prepared. There will also be extra police to ensure women can enter and leave the stadium safely, said Soltanifar. Iran host Cambodia on October 10 to continue qualifying for Qatar 2022.

## Bierhoff dismisses Hoeness' criticism in goalkeeper spat

German football federation (DFB) director Oliver Bierhoff has dismissed criticism from Bayern Munich president Uli Hoeness over a perceived lack of backing for Manuel Neuer in the national team. "The accusations have surprised me, I don't understand them," Bierhoff said in a response to an enquiry yesterday. The 51-year-old Bierhoff also said he saw no reason for Germany coach Joachim Loew to become involved in the public discussion between Bayern's Neuer and his international back-up, Marc-Andre ter Stegen of Barcelona. "The national coach has already said at the end of last year he will build from Manu to the European Championships when nothing extraordinary happens," said Bierhoff. "I don't know if you have to repeat constantly that Manu's recent performances speak for him. And at the same time the coach sees the excellent performances from Marc-Andre ter Stegen, who will get his chance."

## PREVIEW

# Russia warn Japan to bring 'A-game' or face shock

'THE PRESSURE IS ON JAPAN TO PERFORM IN FRONT OF THEIR HOME CROWD'



Russia's centre Dmitry Gerasimov (second left) takes part in a captain's run training session at the Tokyo stadium yesterday. (AFP)

AFP  
Tokyo

Russia captain Vasily Artemyev has warned Japan that unless they bring their "A-game" in tomorrow's Rugby World Cup opener, the hosts could face a mauling.

The Japanese go into their Pool A clash in Tokyo as strong favourites, but Artemyev insisted that Russia's "Bears" would be ready to pounce if Jamie Joseph's side fail to produce their best.

"The pressure is on Japan to perform in front of their home crowd," Artemyev told AFP in an interview.

"In realistic terms we may only have a 20% chance – but

we will do our best definitely to spoil it for Japan.

"As strong as they are, Japan will have to bring their A-game to win," added Russia's record try-scorer.

"If they play any less I think we'll have a good chance."

Japan, currently ranked 10th in the world, squeaked a narrow 32-27 victory when the teams met last November.

And Artemyev promised the Russians would rise to the challenge in front of 40,000 fans in Tokyo, while attempting to ratchet up the mind games.

"If we were playing against an underdog team, we would be under a lot of pressure to get the win under our belts," said the 32-year-old, who starts as full-back against Japan.

"I don't think we need to put

any pressure on ourselves. Everybody understands how big the game is, how big the occasion is – there will be enough adrenaline in our bodies to raise the dead."

Japan, who sent shockwaves through rugby by stunning South Africa 34-32 in their World Cup opener four years ago, have targeted reaching the knockout stages for the first time. The Brave Blossoms will likely need to beat Scotland in their final group game to achieve that, following fixtures against Ireland and Samoa, leaving them no margin for error.

#### 'FAST AND FURIOUS'

But Artemyev has threatened to cause "chaos" to Japan's plans tomorrow, despite Russia's shaky build-up to the tournament,

which included a record 85-15 pummelling by Italy.

"We've been working really hard to be competitive – we're not just another team Japan can push over" said the veteran winger, who went to university in Dublin and speaks English with a distinctly Irish twang.

"It's almost a once-in-a-lifetime experience for a lot of the guys. We need to counter their organisation and add a little bit of chaos into their organisation."

Russia coach Lyn Jones predicts a "fast and furious" game against the Japanese and has backed wingers Kirill Golosnitskiy and German Davydov to keep Japan's defence busy.

Artemyev, meanwhile, pointed to an experienced core of players in the Bears side who can bring a sense of calm in only the

country's second World Cup appearance, and first since 2011.

"The amount of attention is a bit unusual for our boys," he admitted. "But we have a good mixture of youth and experience and you learn how to manage your nervousness and your emotions for big games."

"The experienced guys with cooler heads can direct the hot-headed guys like German towards the same goal."

Artemyev himself can't wait for kick-off. "Many of our modern supporters don't remember us playing in 2011 in New Zealand," he said.

"We want to show we can compete against Tier One nations and we want to become a regular fixture at the World Cup – that's our main goal for the future."

## SPOTLIGHT

## England's discipline will be key: Mitchell

Reuters  
Sapporo, Japan

England must be disciplined and adaptable at the World Cup given a push to eliminate high tackles and ongoing debate over the rules of the breakdown, defence coach John Mitchell yesterday ahead of their opener against underdogs Tonga.

Governing body World Rugby's new guidelines have put referees under scrutiny over how they deal with high and dangerous contact, and led to concerns the tournament may see a shower of red cards.

The changes have already had an impact.

New Zealand's Scott Barrett was red carded, and subsequently banned for three weeks, for a high tackle on Australia's Michael Hooper in a test last month, a decision England coach Eddie Jones called "ridiculous".

Mitchell, speaking in Sapporo ahead of the Pool C clash on Sunday, said his side's discipline should keep them on the right side of the law regardless of refereeing interpretations.

"At the end of the day we are very strong on discipline... and the elements that referees talk about and focus on, we are very clear on those areas," he told a news conference.

"So what's important to do is to make sure your own strengths can still come out but be prepared to adapt as well, and recognise what referees are doing, in the course of a match."

"You have to be careful not to premeditate and be flexible."

The New Zealander added that referees had been collaborating closely ahead of the tournament, which should help consistency.

Mitchell said there was a real danger of overloading the players in terms of second guessing how referees will act and approach issues such as letting a tackler stay in the game at the breakdown.

"The world is full of lots of information," he added. "You have to be very, very careful that you do not cloud your players."

"We feel we consistently train the right action but this is a game of force and speed, and timing is not always right."

As for England's opponents on Sunday, Mitchell said Tonga would play high on emotion because simply playing at the World Cup would lift the Pacific Islanders to a new level.

But England, who were knocked out in the Pool phase on home soil four years ago, were ready for anything.

"Rather than focusing on the technical and the tactical, I think it's what it means to them," he said.



England's coach John Mitchell speaks during a news conference ahead of their match against Tonga in Sapporo, Japan yesterday.

## FANS

## Twickenham to Tokyo: 'Rugby bikers' arrive at WC

AFP  
Tokyo

After cycling more than 20,000 kilometres (14,000 miles) through 27 countries from Twickenham to Tokyo, two rugby-mad fans finally arrived yesterday with a crucial item: the referee's whistle for the opening World Cup game.

Ron Rutland and James Owens have raised more than 75,000 euros (\$82,500) for the official World Cup charity, ChildFund Pass It Back, and seek to seize on the first time the tournament has been played in Asia to lift awareness of the game.

In an interview with AFP as they passed through Hanoi, the pair said they had encountered surprisingly few mishaps – apart from dodging aggressive street dogs in Iran and Turkey, and stomach bugs that laid them both low in India.

"Cycling through countries like Iran and Turkey, numer-

ous times people slowed down, opened their windows, handed us Cokes and water, oranges and fruit, countless, countless times," South African-born Rutland, a former rugby player, told AFP.

They bedded down in a monastery in Myanmar, stayed with families in Tajikistan and otherwise pitched their tent wherever they could if the weather cooperated.

It is not the first long-distance adventure for Rutland.

He cycled through every country in Africa en route to the 2015 Rugby World Cup in England, and in 2017 played what has been billed as the longest hole of golf in history – 80 days and 20,000 shots in total – across Mongolia.

They packed very lightly along the way – a few clothes, some first-aid essentials and a GPS tracker mapping their progress online, as well as the precious cargo of the whistle that Welshman Nigel Owens will use to referee the Japan-Russia opener today.

### Japanese and Russian fans party before World Cup opener

The Rugby World Cup's power to bring people together was abundantly clear yesterday as Japanese and Russian fans sang songs and competed in drinking games in a small Tokyo restaurant the night before the tournament's opening match. The two nations are set to go head-to-head in the World Cup's first game today and the players of the Moscow Dragons amateur rugby club travelled

7,400 kilometres to be part of the festivities. Fortunately, they have friends eager to show them around Tokyo.

Mitsuo Maeda, a Japanese national who has lived in Moscow for over 25 years, is a member of the club and has brought his team mates to Tokyo for the opening weekend of matches. Just hours after landing, Maeda had organised dinner for the

Dragons, and the accompanying team from Moscow State University Rugby Club, with his Japanese friends from back home.

The sake was flowing and toasts were made as the two sets of fans bonded over their love of beer, singing and most importantly rugby.

"We say in the club, once a Dragon, always a Dragon," said Maeda.

"It unites people. That is what rugby is about and I am proud of being in a club like this."

The fans all have tickets for today's opener and will be going on a bar crawl before the match, which begins at 19:45 local time.

The Russian fans are keen to use the World Cup to make new friends and boost the sport's popularity back home. "This is a big festival of rugby,

The World Cup is a special opportunity," one fan called Peter said.

"There are several guys from Japan who played for the Dragons seven or eight years ago and they have organised this dinner to meet Russian friends."

"Maybe some of us never met in Russia, they joined rugby later, but in any case it is part of a family."

Reuters

## BOTTOMLINE

## Fiji unleash overseas stars against Australia

AFP  
Sapporo, Japan

Fiji coach John McKee named 12 players that ply their trade in foreign leagues to face Australia tomorrow, with many tipping the Flying Fijians as possible Rugby World Cup giant-killers.

New Zealander McKee also selected three players – lock Leone Nakarawa, number eight Viliame Mata and winger Josua Tuisova – who played in the sevens teams that won gold at the Rio Olympics.

The team is led by flanker Do-

miniko Waqaniburotu, who plays for Pau in France's Top 14, with fly-half Ben Volavola also based in France for Paris club Racing 92.

"The team is selected 100% on merit and the local-based players have earned their places in the team alongside our renowned overseas-based players," McKee told reporters.

"We know Australia are a very good team and present a big challenge for us but, because of our preparation, I know that our team is mentally and physically ready for that challenge," he added.

McKee has urged his play-

ers to improve their discipline at the World Cup, with his team never short of attacking flair. Fiji, currently ranked 9th in the World Rugby rankings, come into the tournament having shown they can take on the established teams with a shock 21-14 victory over France last year.

They also defeated the Maori All Blacks for the first time in 62 years as part of a drawn two-match series.

However, they have a mountain to climb to make the quarter-finals for the third time in their history, facing Australia first up in a pool that also includes Wales,

Georgia and Uruguay.

#### THE SQUAD

Kini Murimurivalu; Josua Tuisova, Waisea Nayacalevu, Levani Botia, Semi Radradra; Ben Volavola, Frank Lomani; Viliame Mata, Peceli Yato, Dominiko Waqaniburotu (cap); Leone Nakarawa, Tevita Cavubati; Peni Ravai, Samuel Matavesi, Campese Ma'afu

REPLACEMENTS: Tuvare Vugakoto, Eroni Mawi, Manasa Saulo, Tevita Ratuva, Mosese Voka, Nikola Matawalu, Alivereti Veitokani, Vereniki Goneva.



Australia's Kurtley Beale during a training session in Ebetsu, Japan, yesterday.

MLB

# Giants beat Red Sox, hand manager Bochy 2,000th win

'It's not a number I ever thought about. I never thought about it this year and I'm being honest'

Reuters  
Boston

Jeff Samardzija took a no-hitter into the sixth inning to highlight Bruce Bochy's 2,000th managerial victory as the San Francisco Giants beat the host Boston Red Sox 11-3 on Wednesday night.

Bochy became the 11th skipper in big league history to reach 2,000 career wins, accomplishing the feat just over a week before he intends to retire. Stephen Vogt had four RBIs, and Kevin Pillar and Cristhian Adames added three hits as the Giants (74-78) won their third straight.

"It's not a number I ever thought about. I never thought about it this year and I'm being honest," Bochy said.

"It's gotten a little attention here recently but that number just represents so many people — more than anybody are those players. It doesn't happen without them."

Rafael Devers had the Red Sox's first hit when he homered with two outs in the sixth inning, his 30th blast of the season to go with his 50 doubles. He and Xander Bogaerts (31 HR, 50 2B) are the first teammates in major league history to reach 30 homers and 50 doubles in the same season.

Prior to Devers' homer, Samardzija (11-12) had held the Red Sox (79-72) hitless while working around four walks. Samardzija left up 4-1 after Brock Holt singled off him leading off the seventh, ending his night with the one run allowed on two hits with two strikeouts over six-plus innings. Fernando Abad took over and let Boston get within two runs when Sandy Leon singled home Jackie Bradley Jr. with two outs in the seventh.

San Francisco responded with a pair of runs in the eighth and five more in the ninth to blow the game open. A Bradley homer in the bottom of the ninth off Giants reliever Enderson Franco, who was making his major league debut, completed the scoring.

The Giants jumped ahead in the first inning on a Pillar RBI groundout and a two-run shot by Vogt off the Pesky Pole in right field. Brandon Crawford added an RBI double in the third for a 4-0 lead.

All those runs came off Red Sox opener Jhoulys Chacin (3-11), who gave up five hits, walked two and fanned six over 2 2/3 innings.

Prior to the game, Red Sox legend Carl Yastrzemski threw out the first pitch to his grandson, Giants outfielder Mike Yastrzemski. Mike went 1-for-4 with a walk, an RBI and two runs in the contest.

## COLE PITCHES ASTROS PAST RANGERS, INTO PLAYOFFS

Gerrit Cole reached a significant milestone while pitching the Astros to a 3-2 victory over the visiting Texas Rangers on Wednesday, allowing Houston to clinch its fourth playoff berth in five years.

Yuli Gurriel and Jose Altuve slugged homers for the American League West-leading Astros, who can do no worse than landing an AL wild card. The win also lowered Houston's magic number to two to lock up the American League West Division title. Cole (18-5) struck out Rangers designated hitter Shin-Soo Choo with an



San Francisco Giants starting pitcher Jeff Samardzija pitches against the Boston Red Sox during the first inning at Fenway Park. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

### RESULTS

Houston	3-2	Rangers
Giants	11-3	Red Sox
Angels	3-2	Yankees
Cardinals	5-1	Nationals
Rays	8-7	Dodgers
Reds	3-2	Cubs
Mets	7-4	Rockies
Padres	2-1	Brewers
Phillies	4-1	Braves
Athletics	1-0	Royals
White Sox	3-1	Twins
Indians	2-1	Tigers
D'backs	5-4	Marlins
Mariners	4-1	Pirates
Blue Jays	11-10	Orioles

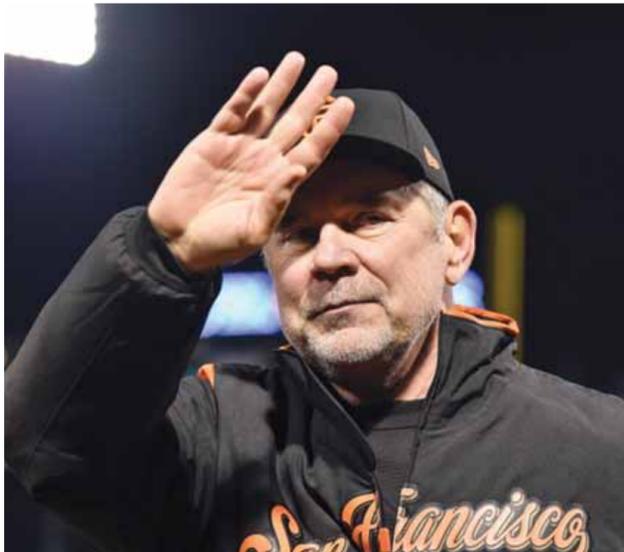
89.8 mph changeup to conclude the top of the sixth inning and record his 300th strikeout on the season.

He became just the third pitcher in franchise history to reach that benchmark in a single year, joining fellow right-handers J R Richard (313 in 1979, 303 in 1978) and Mike Scott (306 in 1986).

He hit the mark in just 198 1/3 innings, just missing the record held by Randy Johnson, who recorded his 300th strikeout in 197 2/3 innings in 2001.

Cole worked eight innings and allowed two runs on six hits and one walk with 10 strikeouts. It marked his 19th double-digit strikeout start on the season and seventh in succession, matching the club record set by staff mate Justin Verlander earlier this season. Cole is 14-0 with a 1.87 ERA over his last 20 starts.

The Astros (100-53) reached 100 victories for a third consecutive season. Houston owns the best record in the majors, taking a one-game lead over the New York



San Francisco Giants manager Bruce Bochy waves to fans after winning his 2000 game at Fenway Park against the Boston Red Sox. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

Yankees, who lost 3-2 at home to the Los Angeles Angels. The Astros also completed a home season sweep of the Rangers, finishing 9-0 vs.

Texas at Minute Maid Park. Houston didn't break the scoreless tie until the fifth inning, when Gurriel slugged a two-run home run off Rangers left-hander Kolby Allard (4-1) with two outs.

Gurriel followed a single from Yordan Alvarez with his 30th homer, a 362-foot shot to left-center field. At 35 years old, Gurriel is the third-oldest player in history with 30 homers, 40 doubles and 100

RBIs in a season (David Ortiz, 40, in 2016; Vinny Castilla, 36, in 2004). Allard allowed two runs on four hits and four walks with two strikeouts over five innings.

Altuve socked his 29th homer against Emmanuel Clase leading off the seventh.

The Rangers (74-79) got a run in the top of the seventh on an error by Astros catcher Martin Maldonado, and Ronald Guzman homered, his 10th, off Cole leading off the eighth. Texas placed the first two runners on in the ninth against Roberto Osuna, but the Astros closer escaped for his 35th save.

NBA

# Wizards' Thomas has thumb surgery, out for 6-8 weeks

AFP  
Washington

Washington Wizards guard Isaiah Thomas, twice an NBA All-Star, will be sidelined for six to eight weeks after undergoing successful surgery on Wednesday on his left thumb.

The operation to repair a rupture of the radial collateral ligament of the thumb was required after Thomas suffered the injury during a routine pre-season workout on Monday. If the recovery timetable is accurate, the 30-year-old American will miss the first one to three weeks of the 2019-20 campaign as well as the entire pre-season, losing crucial time with new teammates after signing with the Wizards as a free agent last July.

"This was an unfortunate setback for Isaiah, but with his resolve and the top care he will receive from our medical team, we expect him to make a full recovery," Wizards general manager Tommy Sheppard said in a statement.

"In the meantime, he will continue to mentor our young guards and have a positive impact on the team as we start training camp."

Thomas has played for six clubs in eight seasons, making All-Star backcourt appearances with Boston in 2016 and 2017, averaging a career-best 28.9 points in the 2016-17 campaign. Thomas played only 12 games for Denver last season, missing the first 56 games of the season with a nagging hip injury he suffered in the 2017 playoffs for Boston. He underwent right hip surgery in 2018.

Magic 'Dream Team' jersey among items in sports auction  
A 1992 US Olympic 'Dream Team' jersey worn by Magic Johnson and memorabilia from former New York

Knicks coach Red Holzman are among items available in an online auction that began Wednesday.

SCP Auctions launched the bidding process for several items from NBA legends and Major League Baseball greats in the auction, which runs until September 28.

The item expected to receive the biggest bids is the blue USA jersey number 15 worn by Johnson as a member of the first US Olympic collection of NBA stars, which rolled unbeaten through the 1992 Barcelona Olympics.

Johnson had retired from the NBA after revealing he had contracted the HIV virus and played in the 1992 NBA All-Star Game and at Barcelona.

The jersey was photographed to Johnson's appearance in an Olympic quarter-final contest against Puerto Rico, which the Americans won 115-77.

The auction also features game-worn jerseys belonging to baseball greats Willie Mays and Ernie Banks.

The Banks jersey is a gray Chicago Cubs road uniform top from the 1969 season while the 1968 Mays jersey from the San Francisco Giants in a home uniform shirt.

Holzman, who died in 1998 at age 78, coached the New York Knicks to their only two NBA titles in 1970 and 1973.

Among his items now available is a 1970 NBA championship ring, his Hall of Fame induction ring, his 1970 NBA Coach of the Year trophy and the nets used in the clinching games of both NBA Finals won by the Knicks.

Other items include a bat used by former New York Yankees star Lou Gehrig, a 1957 contract signed by Yankees legend Mickey Mantle and a 1936 Winter Olympic ice hockey gold medal belonging to British goaltender Jimmy Foster.



## Senators sign D Chabot to eight-year, \$64mn extension

The Ottawa Senators signed 22-year-old defenceman Thomas Chabot to an eight-year, \$64mn extension yesterday. The Senators' 2015 first-round draft pick (18th overall) was an All-Star in 2018-19 with 14 goals and 41 assists in 70 games. His 55 points ranked 10th among NHL defencemen. "Thomas is an exceptional talent and an outstanding teammate, who is impactful both on and off the ice. He is the type of player that can develop into a core member of a championship-level team in the National Hockey League," Senators general manager Pierre Dorion said in a release. Chabot has tallied 23 goals and 80 points in 134 career games. The extension begins after his entry-level contract expires at the end of the 2019-20 season and runs through the 2027-28 campaign.

NFL

# Rams, Browns looking to put together complete games

Reuters  
Los Angeles

The Los Angeles Rams know what it is like to be the NFL's flavour of the month, and in prime time on Sunday night there will be plenty who will tune in to see if they symbolically pass the torch to the latest up-and-comer.

The Cleveland Browns have not yet lived up to the hype they carried into the season, but they are coming off a victory over an overmatched New York Jets team on Monday and will try to keep their stride against the Rams on Sunday in front of their own fans.

The Browns were humbled at home 43-13 by the Tennessee Titans in Week 1, but took down the Jets 23-3 behind 161 receiving yards from Odell Beckham Jr. and 325 passing yards from quarterback Baker Mayfield, who insists the offence can be even better. "I

think it falls back on me just playing better, getting the ball out and getting completions like I keep harping on. Just trusting the system," Mayfield told reporters this week. "Everybody is going to do their job. We know what everybody is going to do. That is why we practised in camp. That is why we did everything like that. Just trust and do my job."

The Rams might be 2-0 but they have their offensive inconsistencies, too. Second-half mistakes led to a closer-than-necessary 30-27 victory at Carolina in Week 1, and in their home opener last week, the Rams didn't score their first touchdown against New Orleans until late in the third quarter. And that was a game in which the Saints struggled to move the ball without quarterback Drew Brees.

Injuries to Rams tight end Tyler Higbee (lung contusion) and guard Austin Blythe (ankle) have both listed as day-to-day

moving forward, potentially creating more adjustments for an offence still searching for a flow.

"Whatever the doctor's orders are, that's what's in the best interest of Tyler, is exactly what we'll follow," Rams head coach Sean McVay told reporters of Higbee, who coughed up blood and was hospitalized briefly following his injury. "What that means as far as this week, the following week, we'll have a little bit more updates as we go."

After passing for 186 yards against the Panthers, Rams quarterback Jared Goff recovered from a slow start on Sunday to throw for 283 yards and a touchdown. Los Angeles running back Todd Gurley rushed for 97 yards in Week 1 and 63 yards last week, while scoring his first TD, but has not yet looked like a force after entering the season with questions about a knee issue from last year. While the Rams' defence looks

further along than the offence, defensive tackle Aaron Donald is still nursing a sore back that surfaced in the first half against the Saints. Both he and running back Malcolm Brown (ankle) were limited in practice Wednesday. The Browns' midweek injury report was packed. At full speed Wednesday were Beckham (hip), running back/return man Donnell Hilliard (concussion) and kicker Austin Seibert (hip). Those limited included guard Joel Bitonio (abdomen) and wide receiver Rashard Higgins (knee).

Tight end as David Njoku is out Sunday after breaking his wrist in Monday's game. Others that did not practice Wednesday: safety Morgan Burnett (quad), right tackle Chris Hubbard (foot), linebacker Christian Kirksey (chest), left tackle Kendall Lamm (knee), defensive tackle Larry Ogunjobi (ankle), safety Damarious Randall (concussion) and linebacker Adarius Taylor (ankle).



RAMS HEAD COACH SEAN MCVAY

## BADMINTON

# India's Sindhu primed for Tokyo gold, says coach

'I think Sindhu has a good chance and hopefully will come with the better medal'

Reuters  
Mumbai

Pusarla Sindhu will be a strong contender for the women's gold medal at next year's Tokyo Olympics but the 24-year-old's recent World Championship triumph will also make her a target of rivals, India's national coach Pullela Gopichand said.

Sindhu won India's first-ever title at the world badminton championships when she defeated Japan's Nozomi Okuhara 21-7 21-7 to win the women's singles in Basel last month.

It was also an end to Sindhu's frustrating near-misses, having finished runner-up at the 2016 Olympics, last year's Commonwealth Games and Asian Games and the previous two world championships finals.

With her silver from Rio, Sindhu is already India's most successful female Olympian but the latest triumph also boosted the nation's hopes of a medal in Tokyo next year.

"I think it would be fair to say that she would be one of the big contenders for the gold medal," Gopichand told Reuters in an interview.

"But having said that, there is competition, and it just gets more for Sindhu because she will be the target, people have a year to plan against her.

"So, of course she needs to train, she needs to evolve, she needs to add new thinking to the armoury and that's very important." While India's field hockey team have won eight Olympic titles, shooter Abhinav Bindra remains the only individual gold medalist for the country of 1.3bn, who are starved of top sporting success outside cricket.

In the world championships semi-finals, an aggressive Sindhu dismantled China's Chen Yufei 21-7 21-14 while it took her just 38 minutes in the final to see off Okuhara with the Japanese player wilting under a barrage of smashes from her opponent.



File photo of India's Pusarla Sindhu. (Reuters)

Gopichand was delighted with Sindhu's aggression and termed the manner of her championship win as "very special". He, however, warned her ward to continue to evolve ahead of Tokyo.

"It will not be fair to say that there is no competition," Gopichand said.

"I think players like (current Olympic champion) Carolina Marin, Tai Tzu-Ying, Ratchanok (Intanon), the Chinese girls, I think there are a lot of players who will be competition and it'll be disrespectful to

write off competition.

"Having said that, I think Sindhu has a good chance and hopefully will come with the better medal than last time."

Badminton's popularity has grown by leaps and bounds in the country with Saina Nehwal's bronze in women's singles in the London Olympics setting a success path. While the country was boasting the success of Sindhu, the men's sport also got a significant boost when B Sai Praneeth won bronze in Basel.

It was the first world championship medal for a male shuttler since Prakash Padukone won a bronze medal in 1983.

The likes of Nehwal, Sindhu and Sai Praneeth are all products of the Gopichand Badminton Academy in Hyderabad where they have prospered under the watchful eyes of the former All England champion.

"Sai Praneeth did a very important thing. Sai's performance was something I am really happy with," Gopichand said. "Sai's medal got eclipsed by Sindhu's

phenomenal performance.

"I think what Sai has achieved for men's badminton and the men to actually win a world championship bronze medal is a good starting point to do even better in the future."

Gopichand, however, does not agree that India was badminton's new China, which has been the dominant force in the sport for decades. "I don't think we can say that unless we win team events, unless we have depth in all our events and a good bench strength."

## SINDHU CRASHES OUT OF CHINA OPEN

IANS

Changzhou, China

Newly-crowned world champion PV Sindhu crashed out of the ongoing China Open World Tour Super 1000 badminton tournament as she went down fighting to Thailand's Pornpawee Chochuwong yesterday.

wong yesterday.

Fifth seeded Sindhu lost 12-21, 21-13, 21-19 in a thrilling second-round contest that lasted for almost an hour.

The Olympic silver medalist started off strongly by winning the first game wherein she showed no signs of rustiness. However, Chochuwong came out with a remarkable comeback and won the second game

to force the match in the decider.

In the final game, the Indian took an early three-point lead but Chochuwong was quick to close-in the gap. The Indian snatched back the lead -- although a slender one but Chochuwong was not far behind.

Sindhu, who had a three-point advantage at 19-16 failed

to close the game as the Thai shuttler came from behind to seal the deal in her favour and progress to the quarter-finals.

With this loss, India's challenge in the women's singles event has come to an end as Saina Nehwal had made an exit after losing her opening-round clash to Thailand's Busanan Ongbamrunphan. Earlier yesterday, Ashwini Ponnappa and

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy also lost to Yuki Kaneko and Misaki Matsutomo of Japan 11-21, 21-16, 12-21 in the second round of the mixed doubles event.

Before that, Satwiksairaj and Chirag Shetty had lost their second-round match 19-21, 8-21 to Japan's Takeshi Kamura and Keigo Sonoda in the men's doubles event to get knocked out of the tournament.

## FORMULA 1

## Verstappen welcomes 'hard driving' but demands consistency

AFP  
Singapore

Max Verstappen has welcomed the prospect of more competitive racing in Formula One but insists stewards must show consistency if they plan to allow "hard racing" in future so all drivers are aware of their limits.

Red Bull's Verstappen has gained a reputation as an aggressive driver prepared to take risks and while he has drawn the attention of motor racing authorities for some over-exuberant racing in the past, he avoided sanction for an ambitious move on Charles Leclerc on his way to victory at the Austrian Grand Prix in June. Leclerc also came under scrutiny for the manner in which he used all of the track to defend his lead over Lewis Hamilton in the last round at Monza, but stewards opted to give the Ferrari driver a warning instead of applying a more serious penalty.

"If they keep it consistent then I am very happy about it because we have been lacking before in Formula One," Verstappen told reporters yesterday ahead of the Singapore Grand Prix.

"I don't mind a few touches here and there throughout a

grand prix, and even if it's not touches then I think you should be able to defend yourself. For me it's fine and every driver knows this so we will all race the same."

Leclerc echoed Verstappen's views on the subject, noting that he felt more confident defending aggressively against Hamilton in Italy after stewards had decided the Dutchman had overtaken him fairly at the Red Bull Ring.

"I was completely aware of what I was doing and I want to race hard, which is what I did," Leclerc said of his driving in Monza.

"I have changed my approach since Austria and it's been pretty straightforward from the stewards that we can race harder," Renault's Daniel Ricciardo added that while it was difficult for stewards to get it right every time, drivers also needed to be responsible on the track.

"There's touching and there's dirty racing, so it's important to not deviate towards the latter," the Australian said.

"If we remain with a certain level of respect then it's fine but if you are dishing up a little bit of dirt too often, either you get payback from the driver or the stewards intervene. "For now, we are doing OK and controlling it. Emotions can also take over, so your initial feelings might not reflect what you think about it a little later."



Red Bull's Max Verstappen ahead of the Singapore Grand Prix. (Reuters)

## CYCLING

## UCI keen on mixed-team time-trial for Paris

Reuters  
London

A mixed-team time-trial relay could be part of the Paris 2024 Olympic road cycling programme if the event proves popular at this year's world championships, the UCI said yesterday.

After being trialled at the European championships in Alkmaar this year, the mixed-team time trial makes its world championships debut on Sunday in Yorkshire with national teams comprising three male and three female riders.

It follows calls for women's road cycling to have a higher profile and would potentially allow an extra road event in Paris to go alongside the road races and individual time trials.

"The UCI would be interested to see how this format evolves over the next Olympic period and are open to working with the IOC to introduce a new and innovative format into the existing Road Cycling programme at the Olympic Games," a UCI spokesman told Reuters.

"Looking ahead, this would fit perfectly with our objective of complete gender parity at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games with the aim that male and female cyclists will enjoy equal number of quotas, events and medals."

The mixed TTT in Harrogate, Yorkshire, replaces the "trade teams" time trial, which has been in every edition since 2012, and will see three male riders tackle a hilly 14km circuit with the female trio setting off around the

same layout when the second man "tags" them as he crosses the line.

Times will be an aggregate of the male and female riders' with the clock stopping when the second woman finishes.

The Dutch team, who won the mixed TTT at the European championships, are again favourites, especially with several teams holding back their best time trialists for the individual TTs later in the championships.

Some top names will ride it, however, including Vuelta a Espana winner Primoz Roglic.

Other sports such as swimming, triathlon and athletics have introduced mixed-relay formats and organisers of this year's Road Cycling World Championships expect Sunday's race to attract huge interest from the fans.

British Cycling's mixed TTT coach Andy Pink said Sunday's event should be a fascinating tactical battle.

"It's a very lumpy course and strategy is going to be very important, especially as you can drop your third rider," he told Reuters. "I think it's great that the mixed event has been added to the programme. It's a great showcase for women's road cycling. I think the crowds will love it."

Britain's male trio of John Archibald, Dan Bigham and Harry Tanfield are tipped to put down one of the fastest times but Pink said the Dutch women could hold the key.

"Even if the Dutch are down after the men's riders have gone, their women are capable of clawing it back."

## BOTTOMLINE

## Kubica to leave Williams after 2019 season

AFP  
Singapore

Robert Kubica will leave Williams at the end of the 2019 Formula One season, the Polish driver and his British team announced yesterday.

Kubica made a sensational return to F1 with Williams, seven years after partially severing his right arm in a crash at the Rally of Andorra in 2011.

The Pole initially returned as a test driver in 2017 and then reserve driver for the 2018 season before making his full return on race weekends this year.

However, the 34-year-old has grown frustrated with Williams' inability to compete.

"This season has been very tough from a performance point of view, but also been very de-

manding," Kubica, who won his sole Formula One race at the 2008 Canadian Grand Prix for BMW Sauber, told reporters on Thursday ahead of the Singapore Grand Prix.

"Being back in F1 after such a long time is not easy, especially when you are in a difficult situation as we are."

The Pole has taken Williams' sole point of the 2019 season after 14 races as they languish at the bottom of the constructors' championship.

"I would like to thank the team for the last two years and for helping make my comeback to the Formula One grid possible," he said.

"But I feel that the time is now right for me to move on to the next chapter in my career."

Kubica has not ruled out continuing in Formula One but told the BBC it would not come "at

any cost."

"I have to do what will bring me back a bit of joy of racing," he said.

"I am looking forward to the next year and looking for different opportunities," added Kubica, who raced in Formula One from 2006-10 until a rallying accident in February 2011 looked to have finished his career as a race driver.

"In order to evaluate other opportunities I have taken the decision that I will not continue more with Williams, so I will stop at the end of the year with the team. "This opens opportunities for me in the future in different scenarios. Now I will evaluate what is possible."

Kubica's team mate George Russell has already been confirmed for the team for 2020, where he is likely to be joined by current reserve driver Nicholas Latifi of Canada.



Robert Kubica arrives at the paddock of the Formula One Singapore Grand Prix at the Marina Bay Street Circuit in Singapore yesterday.

GOLF

# Tiger, McIlroy and Day to play Japan Skins Game

AFP  
New York

**T**iger Woods, Rory McIlroy, Australian star Jason Day and Japan's Hideki Matsuyama will compete in a Skins Game next month in Japan, organisers announced late Wednesday.

"The Challenge: Japan Skins" will pit 15-time major winner Woods against McIlroy, Matsuyama and Day as top stars from four continents will play October 21 at Accordia Golf Narashino Country Club in Chiba, Japan.

"There are so many fun elements to 'The Challenge' that will have me wanting to take home that title - playing with Hideki on his home turf, Tiger coming back to Japan with a green jacket - the motivation is certainly there for me," said four-time major winner McIlroy.

"I'm a huge fan of the skins format. I love the way it rewards attacking play and think it suits my

game quite well. Any time I can go directly at pins to try and make birdies and eagles, I think it puts me at an advantage. The other fun thing about skins is how you find yourself rooting for the other guys if you're not in a position to win the hole.

"You're hoping they can tie with someone else so you can play for that skin on the next hole. With the skins format, you're always in it until the end."

The Skins Game will mark the competitive return to Japan for Woods after more than 13 years and the first televised exhibition match for McIlroy, Day and Matsuyama.

"I haven't been back to Japan since 2006 and the Golf fans there are some of the best in the world," Woods said. "It's a unique format and a top field with Rory, Jason and Hideki. I can't wait to play against them on a global stage."

"I haven't played a skins format in quite some time, so it will be fun to try something a little different and add a few strategic elements

as we compete. There has already been some friendly banter between us and that will continue until we get to the first tee."

The event, set to finish under floodlights, launches a week of activities at the course that features the Zozo Championship, the first-ever official US PGA Tour event to be played in Japan. Holes increase in monetary value as the event continues, with prize money accumulating when two or more players share the low score on a hole. A player must win the hole outright to take the "skin" - the prize money at a particular hole.

Matsuyama will have a home crowd edge but expects Japanese Golf fans to cheer on his rivals as well.

"I'll be grateful for all the support from the fans in Japan, but with the popularity of Tiger, Rory and Jason, I know they'll also be strongly supported wherever they play," Matsuyama said. "It's amazing to have these great champions playing in Japan."

## Bhatia 'ready to get it going' in PGA Tour pro debut

Akshay Bhatia, the 17-year-old American making his professional debut at the US PGA Tour's Sanderson Farms Championship this week, doesn't have far to look for inspiration.

After all, he's just three years younger than Joaquin Niemann, who became the first US PGA Tour winner from Chile with a victory in The Greenbrier last week. "To see him finally break through and win, it was probably the coolest thing," Bhatia told reporters at the Country Club of Jackson in Mississippi on Wednesday, according to Golf Channel.

"It's inspiring to see that," added Bhatia, who like 20-year-old Niemann opted to forego a US collegiate career and turn pro at an early age. "I'm ready to get it going and see what I can do."

Bhatia, who helped the US to a Walker Cup victory at Royal Liverpool before turning pro this month, made his PGA Tour debut as amateur in March, missing the cut at the Valspar Champion-

ship. Even then he said he and his parents had been discussing for years the possibility that he would turn pro after completing high school.

"I have never liked school," he said. "I've never been very smart going in, sitting in a classroom, and I have the worst attention span when it comes to it. So I just love being outside, I love playing golf, and I just love competing." Bhatia has worked on his game at Dustin Johnson's golf academy and has also received guidance from tour pros including Australian veteran Adam Scott. This week he announced that he had signed an equipment deal with Callaway.

"Expectations, I mean, I don't really have any," Bhatia said. "My coach, George, and I talked about not having any expectations going into every week. What happens, happens. I'm not going to dwell if I don't play well, or go ballistic if I do play well."



US teen star Akshay Bhatia. PICTURE: PGA of America

TENNIS

# Federer happy for China to host Laver Cup in future

'I'm sure they're looking into it, where it's going to go for the next decade or so'



Team Europe's Roger Federer during a practice session in Geneva yesterday. (Reuters)

Reuters  
Geneva

**R**oger Federer said he would be happy for the Laver Cup to be played in China in the future, ahead of the tournament's third edition starting today in Geneva.

After the inaugural Laver Cup contested between Team Europe and Team World was held in Prague in 2017, last year's tournament in Chicago drew sellout crowds as Federer and world number one Novak Djokovic helped Europe win 13-8.

"Why not... it's completely open and flexible, but you have got to ask the Laver Cup people," 20-times Grand Slam champion Federer told reporters yesterday. "I'm sure they're looking into it, where it's going to go for the next decade or so."

"China has been a good place

for us players. The tournaments in Shanghai and Beijing, they've been big. It's growing there as well with all the tournaments that are coming now, also on the women side.

"Sure, there's other countries and cities that really also would like it in the future. I just like it to be in the place that is super excited about hosting the Laver Cup like Prague, Chicago and now also Geneva has shown, that would be the same in China if it ever goes there."

Europe also won the first edition and Team World captain John McEnroe said he hoped they could finally get one over their rivals in Switzerland.

"This is a great event and a great format I believe for our team," McEnroe said. "We've been very close obviously."

"So close yet so far, so it would be awesome if this time we can get over the hump, get a little

luck going our way and step up."

Team World's Nick Kyrgios echoed McEnroe's sentiments and said he was looking forward to what is one of his favourite weeks of the year.

"The way we've come together as a group, our chemistry is much better than Team Europe's and I think that gives us a good shot in every year," Kyrgios said.

"We're out there watching each other play the entire time and I know personally I enjoy seeing my team mates out there and I know these guys feed off energy as well. I think as a group we come together."

**Team Europe:** Rafa Nadal, Roger Federer, Dominic Thiem, Alexander Zverev, Stefanos Tsitsipas and Fabio Fognini  
**Team World:** John Isner, Milos Raonic, Nick Kyrgios, Taylor Fritz, Denis Shapovalov and Jack Sock.



A staff installs Laver Cup trophy in Geneva yesterday. (AFP)

CRICKET

## Dananjaya gets one-year ban due to illegal action

Reuters  
Colombo

**S**ri Lanka spinner Akila Dananjaya has been banned for a year from bowling in international cricket due to an illegal action, the International Cricket Council said yesterday.

Dananjaya, 25, was reported for a suspect action after last month's opening test against New Zealand in Galle, during which he picked up six wickets in Sri Lanka's victory.

His bowling action was found to be illegal after he underwent independent assessment in the southern Indian city of Chennai, the ICC said in a statement. Dananjaya was also reported for a suspect bowling action last November after a test match against England and suspended the

following month after an independent committee found it to be illegal. He was cleared to bowl again in February following remedial work on his action. "As the latest report constitutes the player's second report within a two-year period, the first of which led to a suspension, he is automatically suspended from bowling in international cricket for a period of 12 months," the ICC said. "Dananjaya will be entitled to approach the ICC for a re-assessment of his bowling action after the expiry of this one-year period."

The Galle match against New Zealand was Dananjaya's first test since his reinstatement. He has taken 33 wickets in six tests for Sri Lanka since making his debut against Bangladesh last year, as well as 51 wickets in one-dayers and 22 in Twenty20 internationals.

## Bertens, Stephens bow out of Pan Pacific Open

Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova stunned second seed Kiki Bertens 6-1, 7-5 to reach the Pan Pacific Open quarter-finals in Osaka yesterday, while American Sloane Stephens suffered another early exit. World number eight Bertens made a slow start and fell 4-0 behind in the opening set after serving five double faults in two games.

The Dutchwoman recovered well to share the opening four games with Pavlyuchenkova but dropped her serve in the fifth, failing to keep up with her unseeded opponent's devastating backhands.

Pavlyuchenkova converted another break point to clinch her third victory over Bertens over the last 12 months, and set up a quarter-final date with in-form Japanese wildcard Misaki Doi. Third seed Stephens, who has not reached a quarter-final since the French Open in May, was outplayed in a 6-0, 6-3 defeat by Italian Camila Giorgi. Despite landing just 38% of her first serves in the match, unseeded Giorgi made her opportunities count when she got into play and went on to win the first eight games.

BOXING

## Fight Mayweather or retire, Arum tells Pacquiao

AFP  
Los Angeles

**V**eteran boxing promoter Bob Arum believes Manny Pacquiao should retire from the sport soon unless he can land a lucrative rematch with Floyd Mayweather.

Arum, who promoted Pacquiao during the Filipino icon's golden years, told the World Boxing News website he wanted to see the 40-year-old hang up his gloves soon.

Pacquiao, who won a bruising 12-round battle with Keith Thurman to capture the WBA welterweight crown in July, has not scheduled his next fight. But Arum said he believed Pacquiao, who turns 41 in December, would be risking lasting damage if he extends his career much further.

"Pacquiao, I promoted him for many, many years," Arum told World Boxing News.

"He's an exceptionally good human being, really a fine guy, extraordinarily charitable and a delight. But he's (almost) 41-years-old. And if you're 41 you can't take punishment. You can't take blows like he did in the Thurman fight."

"Sure, he won that fight - but he took a lot of punishment. That punishment is going to have a serious effect on how he lives the rest of his life."

Arum, who earlier this year said he feared Pacquiao risked brain damage before his fight with Thurman, said however the Filipino should consider a rematch with Mayweather.

Mayweather, who is now retired, defeated Pacquiao in their 2015 "Fight of the Century" which largely failed to live up to the hype. "If he gets Mayweather, do that fight and retire," said Arum.

"If he doesn't get Mayweather he should retire. It's not worth it for him to continue boxing."

## Age not an obstacle to Serena's pursuit of 24th major: Mouratoglou

Serena Williams is getting faster and fitter in her hunt for an elusive 24th Grand Slam title and the 37-year-old still has time on time on her side despite missed opportunities, the American's coach, Patrick Mouratoglou, has said. Williams suffered her fourth consecutive defeat in a Grand Slam final at the US Open earlier this month, as she again came

agonisingly close to Australian Margaret Court's all-time record of 24 majors before falling in straight sets.

Williams has not won a set in any of the four Grand Slam finals she has reached since returning from maternity leave in September 2017. At Flushing Meadows, she fell to a first-time Grand Slam finalist in Canadian teenager

Bianca Andreescu. Williams may not need statistics to prove her standing in the game but Mouratoglou is confident she has plenty of gas in the tank to continue her pursuit next season.

"I think time is working for her," Mouratoglou told Sky Sports <https://www.skysports.com/tennis/news/12110/11812882/serena-williams-has-time-on-her->

side-in-pursuit-of-grand-slam-history-says-patrick-mouratoglou. "I think she was much better at the US Open than she was at Wimbledon, and Wimbledon (was) better than Roland Garros. "She is getting back in shape, and the more in shape she will be, the more dangerous she will be. I think she has started to play really good tennis."

Mouratoglou said Williams must play without the pressure of having to solidify her place in tennis history. "This is the highest pressure anyone can have in life, and on the other side of the court she plays girls who have zero pressure because it is their first final," he said.

"At some point, she will figure out how to deal with that."

## IAAF WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

# IAAF and CIFP to recognise moments of fair play

A jury will create a shortlist of five fair play moments from the event. The winner will be revealed at the IAAF Athletics Awards in Monaco on Nov 23

The International Fair Play Committee (CIFP), in partnership with the IAAF, will look for moments that epitomise fair play during the IAAF World Athletics Championships Doha 2019 with a view to recognising one athlete or moment at the IAAF Athletics Awards 2019 later in the year.

The CIFP was established more than 50 years ago to promote the principles of fair play in sport - fair competition, respect, friendship, team spirit, equality and sport without doping. It honours those who respect the written and unwritten rules of sport, which include integrity, solidarity, tolerance, care, excellence and joy, and who set an example for others, on and off the field.

Since Willye White was first honoured with an International Fair Play Trophy in 1965, many other track and field athletes have been recognised for instances of fair play.

At the IAAF World Championships alone, eight awards have been handed out since 2003.

Spanish high jumper Ruth Beitia was the latest recipient of an award. She was recognised for her efforts to console Alessia Trost of Italy after she failed to qualify for the high jump final at the IAAF World Championships London 2017.

It was an emotional moment for Trost, whose mother and former coach had passed away earlier that year.

Two athletes were also recognised for their actions at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

USA's Abbey D'Agostino and New Zealand's Nikki Hamblin were the protagonists in one of the most uplifting moments of the Games.

After they were both tripped in their heat of the 5000m, they put aside their personal anguish to help one another to get back on their feet.

Although clearly in pain from the incident, the pair completed the race.

At this year's World Championships, a jury comprising members of the CIFP and IAAF will create a shortlist of five fair play moments from the championships.

During the week following the championships, fans will be able to cast their votes for the short-listed moment that they feel best exemplifies fair play.

These votes will be combined with the votes from the jury to determine three finalists for the Fair Play Award.

The winner will be revealed at the IAAF Athletics Awards in Monaco on November 23.



## ASPETAR WELCOMES 'FALAH'

Yesterday, Aspetar welcomed Falah the Falcon, the official mascot of the IAAF World Athletics Championships Doha 2019. The mascot toured the hospital and met staff and patients, some of the elite athletes such as Qatari sprinter Mariam Farid, the marathon athlete and European champion Morhad Amdouni, and Algerian footballer Baghdad Bounedjah. Aspetar is the national medical services supplier for The 2019 IAAF World Athletics Championships, taking place between September 27 and October 6 at Khalifa International Stadium, as well as the world's first ever Midnight Marathons which will take place along the Corniche. Aspetar's ongoing collaboration with the

Local Organising Committee of the 2019 World Championships in Athletics is another example of its commitment to helping athletes achieve their full potential during sports events hosted in Qatar. By supporting such events, Aspetar is cementing its leading role in the prevention and treatment of injury to local, regional and international athletes across all sports. Aspetar's experts have a wealth of experience in supporting athletes participating in major tournaments in Qatar, including the 24th Men's Handball World Championship in 2015, the 2015 AIBA World Boxing Championships, the 2016 UCI Road World Championships, FINA world championship and Gymnastic world championship.

IAAF, President Sebastian Coe said, "I am absolutely delighted that the International Fair Play Committee in collaboration with the IAAF will once again honour a Fair Play Moment at the IAAF World Athletics Championships Doha 2019. Athletics is proud that several of our elite athletes have been past recipients of this award - most recently at the 2017 World Championships. This latest initiative demonstrates our profound commitment towards one of the core values of our sport: competing in the spirit of Fair Play."

**JURY MEMBERS:** Sunil Sabharwal (USA) Secretary General, CIFP Kory Tarpenning (USA) Board Member, CIFP Nawal El Moutawakel (MAR) IAAF Council Member Valerie Adams (NZL) IAAF Athletes' Commission Adam Kszczot (POL) IAAF Athletes' Commission Ashton Eaton (USA) IAAF ambassador Ximena Restrepo (CHI) member federation representative Renaud Longuevre (FRA) coach Jon Ridgeon (GBR) IAAF CEO.

**IAAF World Athletics Championships DOHA 2019**  
بطولة العالم للألعاب القوى - الدوحة

"Since the 2003 World Championships in Paris, CIFP and the IAAF have had a wonderful opportunity to award a special Fair Play prize for athletics," said CIFP President Jen Kamuti. "We are once again thrilled to

partner with the IAAF to honour incredible acts of fair play during the World Championships, and to bring the spirit of sportsmanship to a new geography in Doha, Qatar." Speaking on behalf of the

## CRICKET

## Sri Lanka to go ahead with Pakistan tour

AFF  
Colombo

Sri Lanka's cricket board yesterday said it will go ahead with its tour of Pakistan despite fears that players could be the targets of terror attacks during the six-match visit.

Sri Lanka Cricket secretary Mohan de Silva said they received the all-clear from the defence ministry to leave for Pakistan on Tuesday after establishing that there was no threat to the national team.

Sri Lanka Cricket added in a statement that the governing body was assured the Pakistan army would coordinate security set at a level usually reserved for a head of state.

"Sri Lanka Cricket wishes to announce that the forthcoming tour of Pakistan will go ahead as planned, following assurances given by the government of Pakistan that it will provide maximum security," the statement said.

De Silva added that he and "our office bearers will also be accompanying the team".

Reports last week of a possible terror attack were referred to the defence ministry for investigation. The Sri Lanka team was the target of an attack during a Test match in Pakistan's Lahore in March 2009, with six players injured when gunmen attacked their bus.

Six Pakistan policemen and two civilians were killed. Since the attack, a majority of international teams have refused to tour the South Asian country. Sri Lanka's first match in Lahore after that was one T20 game against Pakistan in October 2017. De Silva visited Pakistan last month along with a security consultant to check out the arrangements made by the hosts.

The six-match tour, due to start on September 27, was put on hold last week after the Sri Lanka prime minister's office warned the board it had unspecified information about a possible attack against its players.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said it was not aware of any information relating to the safety of the Sri Lankan team, but reiterated its commitment to providing security. Ten senior players opted out of the tour citing security concerns. Sri Lanka has already announced two squads for the three one-day internationals and the three T20 matches.

### MATCH SCHEDULE

**1st ODI:** Karachi, September 27  
**2nd ODI:** Karachi, September 29  
**3rd ODI:** Karachi, October 2  
**1st T20:** Lahore, October 5  
**2nd T20:** Lahore, October 7  
**3rd T20:** Lahore, October 9



Pakistan captain Sarfraz Ahmed (left) and team bowling coach Waqar Younis take a break during a training session at the Gaddafi Cricket Stadium in Lahore yesterday. (AFP)

## Ethiopia's Dibaba out of world championships with foot injury

Ethiopia's 1,500 metres world record holder and 2015 world champion Genzebe Dibaba has withdrawn from the world championships starting in Doha next week due to a foot injury, her management company said yesterday.

The Ethiopian, who set a new 1500m world record in 2015 of 3:50.07 before clinching the world title in Beijing, was diagnosed with a partial rupture in her right foot after the Zurich Diamond League meeting in August, Pineda Sport said in a statement.

The 28-year-old, who won silver at the 2016 Rio Games, is the younger sister of triple Olympic gold medalist Tirunesh. Her withdrawal leaves Kenya's defending champion and Olympic gold medalist Faith Kipyegon and Ethiopian-born Dutchwoman Sifan Hassan, who broke the world mile record (4:12.33) in July, as favourites for the title.

In another blow to the blue riband race at the global competition, Kenya's 1,500m defending champion Elijah Manangoi announced earlier this week that he would not be defending his title due to injury.

## SPOTLIGHT

## Qatar Airways announces partnership with KAS Eupen

Qatar Airways is excited to announce that it has signed a multi-year sponsorship agreement with Belgian football club KAS Eupen further growing its global sporting partnerships portfolio.

This agreement will see the airline's logo proudly placed on the team's playing jersey from the 2019/20 season. Qatar Airways branding will also be placed around KAS Eupen's stadium. KAS Eupen competes in the Jupiler Pro League, the Belgian First Division and has established a reputation for developing young talented footballers such as Moussa Wague and Henry Onyekuru.

KAS Eupen has also played a pivotal role in developing many young Qatari players including Akram Afif, Abdelkarim Hassan and several other members of Qatar's 2019 AFC Asian Cup winning squad.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, HE Akbar al-Baker, said: "We are very pleased to announce this new partnership, which will see Qatar Airways become the main shirt sponsor of KAS Eupen from the 2019/20 season. We are continually striving to boost our global sporting sponsorship portfolio, and this partnership is just one more example of our dedication to the sports sector and our belief in the power of sport to bring people together. Qatar Airways has strong ties with

Belgium operating eight weekly passenger services to Brussels from Doha and 19 weekly all-cargo services to Liege. This partnership demonstrates our long term commitment to further growing and developing our relationship with Belgium."

Qatar Airways Senior Vice-President, Marketing and Corporate Communications, Salam al-Shawa, said: "We are delighted to add KAS Eupen to our global football sponsorship portfolio. We look forward to working and engaging with the club and its fans to help make a real difference through this exciting new partnership. Sport is a key pillar of the long-term vision of the State of Qatar, and as Qatar's national carrier, we welcome the opportunity to use sport as a means for youth development here in Qatar and around the world."

KAS Eupen Board of Directors representative Dr Andreas Bleicher, said: "We are delighted to announce our partnership with one of the most prestigious and awarded airlines in the world. Qatar Airways will be our Main Shirt Sponsor from now on, which puts our club within the remarkable global football club portfolio of Qatar Airways such as AS Roma, Boca Juniors, FC Bayern München and Al Sadd SC. Our professional team will wear the Qatar Airways logo on our jersey from now on. Our partnership is both

incentive and commitment for us to stay in Belgium's top flight league, to improve our professional to youth teams and also continuously develop our club organisationally and increase our social engagement. As a club we will support Qatar Airways' ambition in the Belgian airline and tourism industry, so that it will become a win-win situation for both entities. We are looking forward to an exciting partnership with Qatar Airways."

KAS Eupen joins AS Roma, Boca Juniors, FC Bayern München and Al Sadd SC in Qatar Airways' global football sponsorship portfolio. In addition, Qatar Airways is also the Official Airline Partner of FIFA, which includes 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia, the FIFA Club World Cup, the FIFA Women's World Cup and the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar.

The national carrier for the State of Qatar currently operates a modern fleet of more than 250 aircraft via its hub, Hamad International Airport (HIA) to more than 160 destinations worldwide.

The airline has launched a host of exciting new destinations in 2019, including Lisbon, Portugal; Malta; Rabat, Morocco; Davao, Philippines; Izmir, Turkey; and Mogadishu, Somalia; and will add Langkawi, Malaysia; and Gaborone, Botswana, to its extensive network in October 2019 with Luanda, Angola; and Osaka, Japan, following in 2020.

