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FOOTBALL / QNB STARS LEAGUE

Al Duhail, Al Rayyan get back to winning ways

By Sports Reporter Doha

Striker Mohamed Muntari led the charge with two goals as Al Duhail got the better of Al Wakrah 4-2 in a pulsating Week 4 match of the 2019-20 QNB Stars League at the Al Sadd Stadium yesterday. Muntari scored in the 36th and 65th minutes. Ali Afif (24th minute) and Almoez Ali (90+1 penalty) were the other scorers for Al Duhail. Mohamed Benyettou (third minute) and Ismail Mahmoud (49th minute) scored for Al Wakrah.

took their points tally to eight and are back in strong contention for the title. Al Wakrah thus crashed to their second defeat, having lost to Al Sadd 1-4 in Week 1. They had defeated Qatar SC and Al Shahania by an identical 2-0 margin. In the earlier match, Al Rayyan marched to a deserving 2-0 victory against Al Khor at the Al Janoub Stadium yesterday. The Lions' marksmen were Franck Kom (66th minute) and Abdelaziz Hatem (75th minute). It was Al Rayyan's first victory, after three successive draws, and they now have six points, while Al Khor remained on four points. A well-fought first half was largely dominated by Al Rayyan, with their superior attacking strengths on display. With neither side creating too much in the opening stages, it soon

burst into life with Al Rayyan's Yacine Brahimi nearly scoring as he collected a pass out wide and drove a fierce shot across the face of the goal which required a fine finger-tipped save from Rajab Hamza. Despite such dominance, it was Al Khor who nearly took a surprise lead when Ahmed Hamoudan broke free of the Al Rayyan defence, lunged into the box and was stopped by some fine goalkeeping by Fahad Baker when in on goal. So often on the back foot, Al Khor started the second half in blistering fashion and were unfortunate to have a goal ruled out by VAR within minutes of the restart. After chasing a long ball over the top, Tiago Bezerra was able to beautifully lob the goalkeeper from six yards out. However, VAR adjudged the player to have handled the ball as he con-

trolled it. The deadlock was finally broken in the 66th minute from a set piece taken short as Mowafak Awad whipped in a low cross from the right which Kom met with the faintest of touches to steer in at the back post. The frustration following the goal boiled over leading to Wagner receiving his marching orders for a second bookable offence. With a one-man advantage Al Rayyan turned up the pressure and quickly secured their second goal of the night. Advancing down the left, Brahimi played the ball short to Abdelaziz Hatem who hit a sumptuous 25-yard, left-footed shot which swerved from left to right and struck the back of the net past a helpless goalkeeper. Al Rayyan held on to the lead with ease and closed out the victory for a vital three points.



Al Duhail's Mohamed Muntari (second from left) and Almoez Ali (second from right) celebrate a goal during the QNB Stars League match against Al Wakrah yesterday. PICTURE: Noushad Thekkayil

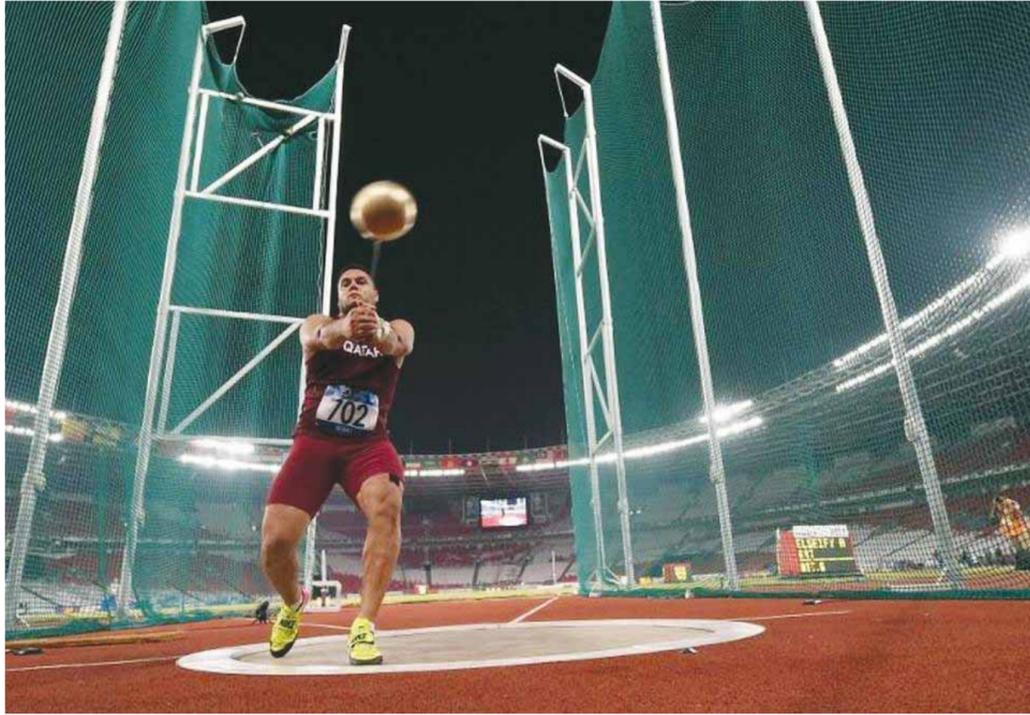
ATHLETICS

El Seify up against hammer throw giants and 80m goal

2014 Asiad gold medallist has his work cut out to ensure high position at Worlds

By Sports Reporter Doha

Qatar's Ashraf El Seify has his task cut out when the men's hammer throw action gets underway on October 1, and concludes with the medal round the next day, at the IAAF World Athletics Championships Doha 2019. The 2018 Asian Games gold medallist has never hit the 80m mark in his career but has made it his goal, something that will send him into the uppermost echelons of the discipline. With a personal best of 78.19, the 24-year-old will be going up against at least six athletes, including defending world champion Pawel Fajdek of Poland and his compatriot Wojciech Nowicki, and Olympic champion Dilshad Nazarov of Tajikistan, who have been past the 80m mark in their careers. "I want to throw 80m this season, that is my aim. If I make it here in Doha at the World Championships, I could be placed in a high position," El Seify was quoted as saying on the Doha 2019 World Championships website. In Jakarta last year, the former two-time World under-20 champion had beaten Nazarov for gold, but Nazarov won gold ahead of his younger rival at the Asian Athletics Championships, which was a test event held in April this year for the IAAF World Championships at the state-of-the-art Khalifa International Stadium. History, however, may be on Fajdek's side as he prepares to compete in Doha against a formidable field. Fajdek, oddly enough, may have never won an Olympic medal, but has three world titles to his name. The field also has Denis Lukyanov, who is fourth on this season's world list with 78.97m. Bence Halász maintained Hungary's proud tradition in this



Season's best mark for Qatar's Ashraf El Seify is 76.21 at Celje, Slovenia, in July.

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

event by taking bronze at last year's European Championships in Berlin and stands one place below Lukyanov on the 2019 world list with 78.54m. Spain's Javier Cienfuegos,

only 28 but a veteran of the 2009 World Championships and European U20 bronze medallist in that same year, has inserted himself into the mix in extravagant fashion with his effort of 79.38m

in Andújar on September 6. But Fajdek's toughest competition looks likely to come from his Polish teammate - and fellow 30-year-old - Nowicki. The latter, who earned Olympic bronze in Rio, followed up last year by winning the European title in Berlin with 80.12m, beating Fajdek, the defending champion, into second place with a best of 78.69m. Nowicki leads this year's world list with the effort of 81.74m he produced in Poznan on July 2, but that was his last throw be-

yond 80 metres. Fajdek, meanwhile, has thrown beyond 80 metres on three occasions since then, topped by a season's best of 80.88m in Cetniewo on August 3. Nowicki, however, won at the European Team Championships in his native Bydgoszcz and beat Fajdek in their last pre-Doha outing, 79.55m to 79.33m. He will be keen to add a world medal of a different colour to the bronze versions he collected in 2015 and 2017. All in all it looks like being a fascinating struggle. (With inputs from IAAF)

Price, Wang in spotlight for women's competition

With four-time champion Anita Wlodarczyk sidelined with injury, the focus here will fall on the US trio of DeAnna Price, Brooke Andersen and Gwen Berry who occupy the top three spots on the world season's lists, a first in the event for the North American athletics juggernaut so late into a season. Indeed, hopes are high that one of the three will secure the first medal in the event for the US at a World Championships. Price, the winner of last year's IAAF Continental Cup, appears to be the likeliest candidate. The 26-year-old, who reached the 2016 Olympic and 2017 World Championships finals, has won five of her seven competitions and produced the season's two farthest throws, a 77.43m effort in Bloomington in late June and a 78.24m North American record to win the US title in late July. That's nearly a metre and a half better than anyone else in the world. Berry, 30, finished second to Price at the US Championships with a 76.46m effort, her season's best, and two weeks later took the Pan-American Games crown. Andersen, who reached a lifetime best of 76.75m this year, has thrown farther than Berry, but like Berry, has struggled with consistency. More likely to challenge Price will be China's Wang Zheng, the bronze medallist in 2013 and runner-up in London two years ago. While she hasn't thrown quite as far - her season's best is 76.26m from July's national championships - she has been the event's picture of consistency in 2019. Wang has won 11 of her past 12 competitions, including the Asian title at Doha's Khalifa Stadium in April, leads the IAAF Hammer Throw



Challenge standings by more than two metres, and owns four of the season's 10 best throws. With Wlodarczyk absent, Malwina Kopron and Joanna Fiodorow lead the Polish challenge. The 24-year-old Kopron was a surprise bronze medallist two years ago and threw her season's best of 75.23m in her final pre-Doha competition to win the Skolimowska Memorial on 14 September. Fiodorow, twice a bronze medallist at the European Championships, has a 74.71m season's best from early June but has impressed in her run-up to Doha, winning the Europe-USA match on 10 September and finishing second to Fiodorow in Chorzw four days later. Fiodorow was sixth at these championships two years ago. Others expected to figure in the podium chase include Alexandra Tavernier of France, the world bronze medallist in 2015 who improved her own national record to 74.84m in June, and Hanna Malyschik of Belarus, also a world and Olympic finalist who has reached 74.95m this year. (IAAF)



Things to look forward to at Doha 2019

Home advantage

Nothing quite lights up a World Championship than a home winner and the 2019 edition in Doha has a pair of noteworthy gold medal contenders. In the men's high jump all eyes will be on Qatari superstar Mutaz Barshim, who after a lengthy injury lay-off is slowly returning to form and will defend his world title in front of his passionate home fans. The host nation's other heavy-weight performer is 400m hurdler Abderrahman Samba, who last year advanced to No.2 on the world all-time list with a thunderous 46.98 clocking in Paris.

Sponsor potential

The 2019 edition of the IAAF World Championships is all about innovation and for the first time national teams will be permitted to display a logo of a sponsor on their kit. While many may not view this as a hugely significant moment, it as an opening of the door which could make a significant mark on the sport. "We only have really big global moments every two years," says



Qatar's Abderrahman Samba and Mutaz Barshim will lead the charge for the host nation at the 10-day event.

IAAF President Sebastian Coe. "We have to absolutely maximise every bit of financial potential in our sport through those venues, and we wanted this to be a much more equitable process."

Marathons at night

To avoid the intensity of the daytime heat, the decision has been



taken to scrap morning sessions with the introduction of split evening sessions with one-hour intervals to allow for entertainment and family activities across the 10-day programme. The event will see the inaugural mixed 4x400m relay at a World Championship but one of the biggest innovations will be the men's and women's marathons, which

are scheduled to start at midnight. World marathon record-holder and multiple world champion Paula Radcliffe is relishing the prospect. "It's exciting from a competitor's point of view because it's unique and offers the best conditions for the athletes," said the 2005 world champion. "It's rare that people think about the best conditions for the athletes to race in. That has been done here and it will celebrate the iconic Doha skyline and the way it all lights up along the Corniche at night."

It's cool

Much has been made of the hot conditions likely to greet the athletes at the World Championships in Doha. However, local organisers should take enormous credit that they have sought to address the problem by creating a state-of-the-art cooling system at the host venue, the Khalifa International Stadium. Last year during an impressive demonstration of the innovative technology, track temperatures were set to a pleasant 24-26C via the revolutionary technology which will guarantee optimal conditions for the athlete and



Qatar's state-of-the-art cooling system has been very effective in controlling temperatures.

fans alike. Should it be necessary, the technology will likely prove a major hit.

Post-Bolt generation

It may be the first IAAF World Championships not to feature Usain Bolt for 16 years but the galaxy of new emerging star ath-

letes on show will ensure Doha will prove a real hit. The next generation is led by the likes of US sprint ace Noah Lyles and Michal Norman. On the women's side, watch out for triple sprint European champion Dina Asher-Smith of Great Britain and Kenyan steeplechase sensation Beatrice Chepkoech.

In the field, Cuban long jump phenomenon Juan Miguel Echevarria will seek to land a maiden senior outdoor world crown, heavyweight Swedish discus thrower Daniel Stahl hopes to stamp his mark on the event, and keep an eye on Germany's exciting European long champion Malaika Mihambo. (IAAF)

FOCUS

Walsh will look to keep momentum at Doha Worlds

Shot putter has won in Paris and retained his Diamond League title in Brussels



In this March 3, 2018, picture, New Zealand's Tom Walsh celebrates winning the men's shot put final at the 2018 IAAF World Indoor Championships in Birmingham. (AFP)

The current depth in the men's shot put is such that someone could throw beyond 22 metres in Doha and it might not be enough for a medal.

To put the unprecedented level of shot putting into context, just four of the 16 world shot put titles to date have been won with throws in excess of 22 metres. But with a field containing nine men with PBs beyond that mark - including eight of the top 21 men on the world all-time list - then it's safe to assume there will be some big throws in the Qatari capital.

Choosing a winner, however, is a more difficult prediction to make.

Defending champion Tom Walsh is as good a starting point as any. The New Zealander has been on a roll over the past month, winning in Paris with

a season's best of 22.44m and retaining his Diamond League shot put title in Brussels against a quality field.

The two-time world indoor champion rarely disappoints at major championships and has earned medals - three of which are gold - at the past four global championships. A loss - albeit with a still respectable 21.90m - in his final pre-World Championships competition in Chorzow might be just what Walsh needed as motivation heading into Doha.

Olympic champion Ryan Crouser has been in similarly stunning form this year after opening his outdoor campaign with a world-leading PB of 22.74m, the longest throw in the world since 1990. Apart from his 21.11m win at the Drake Relays, he has thrown beyond 22 metres in all of his other competitions

this year, his only losses coming at the IAAF Diamond League meeting in Stanford and the final in Brussels, where he was third.

Darlan Romani joined Crouser and Walsh in the top 10 on the world all-time list after throwing an IAAF Diamond League record of 22.61m in Stanford. The Brazilian beat Crouser and Walsh at last year's IAAF Continental Cup and has won a host of continental titles in recent years but will be keen to land his first global championships medal in Doha.

Poland's Konrad Bukowiecki, who last year at the age of 20 became the youngest member of the 22-metre club with his 22.00m heave indoors, looks to be peaking at the right time. His four most recent competitions have been: 21.91m, 21.92m, 21.99m and a PB of 22.25m in Chorzow, where he defeated Walsh.

Compatriot Michal Haratyk, the European champion indoors and out, was third in Chorzow and sixth in Brussels, but earlier in the year he set - and then equalled - a national record of 22.32m.

Darrell Hill, the 2017 Diamond League champion, and 2015 world champion Joe Kovacs add further strength to the USA's medal chances in this event. Hill set his season's best of 22.35m to win at The Match in what was his final competition before the World Championships. Kovacs, meanwhile, is close behind Hill on the 2019 world list with a best of 22.31m.

Luxembourg's Bob Bertemes is the newest member of the 22-metre club. The 26-year-old added almost a metre to his PB with a national record of 22.22m last month, but showed it wasn't a fluke just a week ago by throw-

ing 22.17m.

No athlete from Luxembourg has ever reached a World Championships final, so should Bertemes make it through the qualifying round, he will have made a piece of athletics history for his nation of 590,000.

World indoor bronze medalist Tomas Stanek is the ninth 22-metre man in the field, although his throws beyond that line were achieved in 2017 and 2018. Nevertheless, the Czech thrower has a season's best of 21.67m and will be expecting to at least make the final.

Other athletes to look out for include Croatia's 2016 world indoor bronze medalist Filip Mihaljevic, Nigerian record-holder Chukwu Enekwechi and two-time world U20 champion Jacko Gill, who has set PBs in his three most recent competitions. (IAAF)

SPOTLIGHT

All eyes on Chinese shot put star Gong



After another nearly flawless season, Gong Lijiao arrives primed to successfully defend her title. If she succeeds, the 30-year-old Chinese star will become just the fourth woman to do so in the event.

Gong has won 12 of her 13 competitions in 2019 and has produced the four best throws, capped by her 20.31m effort to win another IAAF Diamond League title, her third straight, in Zurich last month. With a gap of more than 60 centimetres on her nearest competitor, Gong will start as one of the heaviest favourites at these championships. A medal of any kind will be her sixth at the World Championships, a record for the event.

Her only loss came at the hand of rising US star Chase Ealey, who stole Gong's thunder in their 2019 Diamond League debut in Shanghai, where Ealey reached a near-PB 19.58m to beat Gong by 14 centimetres. The 25-year-old blasted on to the scene on April 6 when she threw 19.67m at the Sun Angel Classic in Tempe, Arizona, her first put beyond the 19-metre mark. She went on to throw beyond 19 metres in nine of her next 12 competitions, and improved to 19.68m in Zurich, where she eventually finished second.

World indoor silver medalist Danniell Thomas-Dodd is another solid medal threat. The 26-year-old twice improved her own Jamaican record, first to 19.48m in April and again to 19.55m in August when taking the Pan-American Games title. While improving, she has been less consistent than Ealey.

Behind that trio, the picture is less clear. Five other women have thrown beyond 19 metres outdoors this season, Maggie Ewen, another US thrower on the rise, the most recent. The 25-year-old produced the best throw of her career, 19.48m, to win the US-Europe match on 10 September. But that was the only 19-metre-plus effort of the season for the multi-talented thrower who won NCAA titles in the shot put, discus and hammer during her collegiate career.

Christina Schwanitz, the 2015 world champion, is still showing solid form, and can't be discounted in the chase for podium spots. The 33-year-old German has reached 19.37m this season. Brittany Crew (19.28m) of Canada, Aliona Dubitskaya (19.21m) and Sweden's Fanny Roos (19.06m) have also breached 19 metres this season but will have to produce breakout performances to be a factor.

Others to watch include Hungary's world indoor champion Anita Marton, European champion Paulina Guba of Poland, and Olympic champion Michelle Carter of the US. (IAAF)

Qualification enters final stages for Doha 2019 Worlds

The IAAF has issued invitations to 130 eligible athletes for additional places to the IAAF World Athletics Championships Doha 2019 following the final review of entries published on Thursday and compared with the published target numbers for each event. "We have an extra week built into the entry timetable for these championships so have been able to open up any available places to give every opportunity to our leading athletes to compete in our showcase championships," said IAAF CEO Jon Ridgeon. "Having now been able to review the final entries, it is clear that some qualified athletes are currently not able to attend. Therefore, as a federation that always tries to put athletes' interests first, we have the opportunity to open entries for one last short window in some events where we have yet to reach maximum target entry numbers," he added. Member Federations and athletes were asked to confirm acceptance of the invitation(s) by later yesterday, when the invitational process was scheduled to be finally closed. (IAAF)

CRICKET

India aim to wrap Twenty20 series in Bengaluru

IAN S
Bengaluru

After a commanding performance in Mohali, Team India will aim to seal the three-match series when they enter the M.Chinnaswamy Stadium for the third and final T20I against South Africa today.

With a washout in the first game in Dharamsala, both the teams were looking to take the upper hand and take an unassailable lead in the series in Mohali. However, it was the Men in Blue who took command at the I.S. Bindra P.C.A. Stadium and came out with a brilliant performance to secure a rather comfortable win.

Deepak Chahar and Virat Kohli

turned out to be the standout performers in Mohali as India cruised to a seven-wicket win against the young Proteas side led by Quinton de Kock.

Team India ticked almost all boxes in Mohali where they first restricted the visitors to 149 and then chased down the target riding on their skipper Kohli's unbeaten 72.

However, one area of concern — which has now been looming over the team — will be the form of wicket-keeper-batsman Rishabh Pant and he will again be in focus in Bengaluru.

Pant, who has been warned by head coach Ravi Shastri and batting coach Vikram Rathour about playing careless cricket, threw away his wicket cheaply and missed out on an opportunity to showcase his talent, which even

ryone speaks of very highly in Mohali.

On Friday, former India captain and NCA head Rahul Dravid spent some time with the Indian players during the practice session and offered some piece of advice to all of them, especially Pant.

For the hosts, it will be a case of continuing with the performance they have been delivering in the recent times. Their batting looks in total control, so is there bowling and fielding.

Proteas, on the other hand, will have their task cut out. In order to level the series, the mantra for them is actually quite simple: score enough runs, i.e. in excess of 180 and give their bowlers something on the Chinnaswamy pitch which historically has been a high-scoring ground.

Big hitters like David Miller, Dwaine Pretorius and de Kock need to fire from the word go. Only then can the visitors pose a challenge against the hosts.

SQUADS
India: Virat Kohli (capt), Rohit Sharma, Shikhar Dhawan, K L Rahul, Shreyas Iyer, Manish Pandey, Rishabh Pant (wk), Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja, Krunal Pandya, Washington Sundar, Rahul Chahar, Khaleel Ahmed, Deepak Chahar, Navdeep Saini.
South Africa: Quinton de Kock (capt/wk), Rassie van der Dussen (vc), Temba Bavuma, Junior Dala, Bjorn Fortuin, Beuran Hendricks, Reeza Hendricks, David Miller, Anrich Nortje, Andile Phehlukwayo, Dwaine Pretorius, Kagiso Rabada, Tabraiz Shamsi, George Linde.



India's Shikhar Dhawan dives to stop a ball during a practice session at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru yesterday. (AFP)

TRI-NATION SERIES

Shakib shines in Bangladesh's win over Afghanistan

'We needed someone to bat through the innings. And luckily today it was my day'

AFP
Chittagong, Bangladesh

Shakib Al Hasan smacked an unbeaten half-century as Bangladesh ended their four-match losing streak to Afghanistan in Twenty20 internationals with a four-wicket win in their final league match of the tri-nation tournament in Chittagong yesterday.

Shakib hit an unbeaten 70 off 45 balls to guide Bangladesh to 139-6 in 19 overs after young off-spinner Afif Hossain led the bowling effort with 2-9, helping the home side restrict Afghanistan to 138-7 in 20 overs.

In pursuit of a modest target, Bangladesh wobbled at the start as openers Liton Das (four) and Najmul Hossain (five) both fell cheaply before Shakib put on 58 runs with Mushfiqur Rahim to steady the innings.

Mushfiqur made 26 off 25 balls, but not before he was dropped by substitute fielder Najib Tarakai off Mohamed Nabi on 14.

Medium pacer Karim Janat dismissed Mushfiqur in the 11th over before a floodlight disruption enabled Afghanistan's bowlers to regroup.

Rashid Khan struck twice after the delay and debutant Naveen-ul-Haq also claimed a wicket as Bangladesh lost Mahmudullah (six), Sabbir Rahman (one) and Afif (two) in quick succession to slide to 104-6.

Mosaddek Hossain cut Rashid late for a brilliant boundary to ease some pressure on the home side before Shakib struck the Afghanistan skipper for a four and six in consecutive balls to take

Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan plays a shot during the Twenty20 match against Afghanistan at Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong. (AFP)



Bangladesh close. "If you look at the last few months, we haven't been up to the mark in T20s. We're working on it. The bowlers bowled well on the wicket," Shakib said after the match. "We needed someone to bat through the innings. And luckily today it was my day," he

said. Mosaddek, who was unbeaten on 19, chipped Naveen at mid-on for two runs in the last ball of the penultimate over to complete only Bangladesh's second T20 win against Afghanistan.

Naveen and Rashid claimed two wickets each for Afghanistan.

Earlier, Afif swung the momentum Bangladesh's way with his double strike in the 10th over of Afghanistan's innings after Hazratullah Zazai made 47 runs off 35 balls, putting on 75 runs with Rahmanullah Gurbaz in the opening stand.

A wicket apiece for Mohammad Saifuddin, Shafiqul Islam, Shakib and Mustafizur Rahman left Afghanistan in disarray before Shafiqullah's 23 off 17 balls gave them a glimmer of hope.

Afghanistan and Bangladesh had already qualified for Tuesday's final in Dhaka after winning two of their previous three matches in a competition that also featured Zimbabwe.

"Best things are that it's happened in the group stages. We have to restart and do the basics right for the final," Rashid said.

"Hopefully I'll be recovered soon," Afghanistan captain says of his tweaked hamstring. "It looks a little sticky, but I should hopefully be OK for the final."

I wanted to go and bowl and see how it goes, whether it's too much or I could recover. It's 50 or 60% fine.

BRIEF SCORES:
Bangladesh: 139 for 6 (Shakib 70*, Naveen 2-20) beat **Afghanistan** 138 for 7 (Hazratullah 47, Afif 2-9) by four wickets.

FOCUS

Pakistan's Hafeez out of landmark Sri Lanka tour

AFP
Lahore

Pakistan yesterday left out veteran batsman Mohamed Hafeez for next week's series start against Sri Lanka, who are touring the country for the first time since they were targeted in a terror attack.

Hafeez, 38, was part of Pakistan's fifth-placed World Cup squad but has been kept off due to his commitments in the Caribbean Premier League, said head coach and chief selector Misbah-ul-Haq.

"He is not out of our plans," added Misbah.

"Whoever is effective for the team will be included in the future."

Fellow World Cup team members Hasan Ali and fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi have also been left out due to poor fitness.

Sarfraz Ahmed will lead the

team in both the one-day and T20 matches. Middle order batsman Iftikhar Ahmed was recalled to the one-day squad after a four year absence.

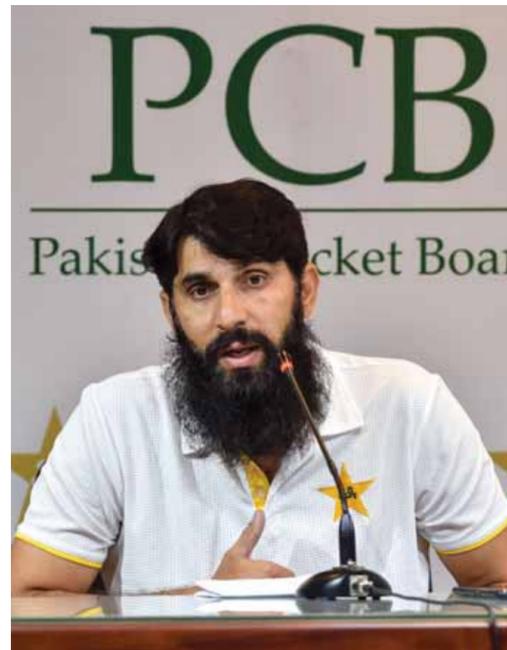
Cricket tours were suspended in Pakistan for six years after a 2009 assault on the Sri Lankan team bus that killed half a dozen police officers and wounded six members of the visiting team.

Sri Lanka agreed to the current tour after a favourable security assessment.

Three one-day internationals will be played in Karachi, the first on September 27.

Another three Twenty20 matches will be played in Lahore in early October.

SQUAD: Sarfraz Ahmed, Babar Azam, Abid Ali, Asif Ali, Fakhar Zaman, Imam-ul-Haq, Haris Sohail, Mohamed Hasnain, Iftikhar Ali, Imad Wasim, Mohamed Amir, Mohamed Rizwan, Shadab Khan, Mohamed Nawaz, Usman Shinwari, Wahab Riaz.



Misbah-ul-Haq speaks at a press conference in Lahore yesterday.

GOLF

Willettt, Rahm share lead after third round

AFP
Wentworth, United Kingdom

Former Masters champion Danny Willett held a share of the PGA Championship lead with Spain's Jon Rahm after a tense third round at Wentworth yesterday.

Rahm was two shots up after the first 16 holes and enjoyed a stroke of luck on the 17th when his second shot was heading out of bounds before hitting a spectator. However, the world number six failed to make the most of his good fortune by pitching to 10 feet and then three-putting for a six and was also just a few feet from driving out of bounds at the last.

After taking a penalty drop another bogey looked on the cards, but Rahm holed from 20 feet for an unlikely par and Willett got

LEADING THIRD ROUND SCORES

201-Jon Rahm (ESP) 66 67 68, Danny Willett 68 65 68
204-Shubhankar Sharma (IND) 71 67 66, Justin Rose 67 68 69, Christiaan Bezuidenhout (RSA) 68 67 69
206-Richie Ramsay 71 68 67, Rafa Cabrera-Bello (ESP) 69 70 67
207-Patrick Reed (USA) 70 70 67
208-Andrew Johnston 69 70 69, Francesco Molinari (ITA) 69 70 69, Andrew Putnam (USA) 71 67 70, Viktor Hovland (NOR) 69 69 70, Paul Casey 68 69 71, Billy Horschel (USA) 72 65 71
209-Ross Fisher 70 73 66, Paul Waring 70 71 68, Henrik Stenson (SWE) 66 69 74
210-Kurt Kitayama (USA) 71 71 68, Rory McIlroy 76 69 65, Alex Noren (SWE) 69 72 69, Jordan Smith 69 71 70, Bernd Wiesberger (AUT) 74 67 69.

up and down from a greenside bunker for a birdie to match his playing partner's 68. On 15 under par, Rahm and Willett have a three-shot lead over Justin Rose, Shubhankar Sharma and Christiaan Bezuidenhout.

"Man, those last two holes made it feel a lot worse than it really was. I was really in control of my game and playing good," Rahm said. "It was not the finish I was looking for, I might have lost a bit of focus, looking into the future instead of staying in the present."

Despite his late woes, Rahm could join Jose Maria Olazabal, Seve Ballesteros, Miguel Angel Jimenez, Ignacio Garrido and Manuel Pinero as a Spanish winner at Wentworth. Willett recovered from a bogey on the first with the aid of six birdies to remain in contention for a seventh European Tour title and a first on home soil.

"This is our biggest tournament of the year for us British guys, it's a massive event," Willett said. "I've been here 10 straight years and I love the place. The crowds are amazing."

Rory McIlroy hasn't abandoned hope of winning after a superb 65 which equalled his lowest score at Wentworth and left him nine shots off the lead.

"I will give it a go for sure and you never know. But at the same time I'm a realist," he said.



England's Danny Willett lines up a shot during the PGA Championship at Wentworth Golf Club in Surrey, south west of London, yesterday. (AFP)

An fires another 66 to lead weather-hit Sanderson Farms event

An Byeong-hun got a hot start with four straight birdies on Friday to shoot back-to-back 66s for the clubhouse lead at the weather-hit Sanderson Farms Championship. An led first-round leaders JT Poston and Tom Hoge by two shots with a 12-under 132 total as the second round was suspended because of darkness after storms halted play on Thursday. Post and Hoge shot second-round 70s and were tied for second with fellow Americans George McNeill (67) and Scottie Scheffler (66). Australia's Cameron Percy was alone in sixth on nine-under through 11 holes.

"I've been putting a lot better the last couple events, so as long as the putts keep dropping, let's see if I can win this season," said An, who is trying to strengthen his position to make the International Presidents Cup team as a captain's pick. The second round will resume Saturday morning at The Country Club of Jackson in Jackson, Mississippi. Storms halted play in the first round and organizers had to play catchup on Friday. South Korea's An has made just one bogey in two rounds. He opened his second round with four straight birdies then added two more on eight and nine for six birdies on the front nine. His only blemish came on the par-five fifth hole after hitting his second shot into the water.



SPOTLIGHT

First-half blitz gets All Blacks home over Springboks

'It was a full 80 minutes right to the end there that we had to work'



New Zealand's Ben Smith (centre) attempts to evade a tackle by South Africa's Frans Malherbe (left) during their Pool 'B' match in Yokohama yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
Yokohama, Japan

Defending champions New Zealand burnished their credentials as favourites for the Rugby World Cup with a hard-fought 23-13 win against top contenders South Africa in a blockbuster match in Yokohama yesterday.

The impressive All Blacks cut the Springboks to ribbons during a five-minute period of dominance in the first half that earned them two converted tries, and then saw off a determined second-half fightback to register the vital Pool B win.

Before nearly 64,000 fans in Yokohama's International Stadium, the All Blacks set the game alight with the sensational scor-

ing spree which was against the early run of play. Until then, the Springboks had enjoyed a huge territorial advantage but were unable to cross the line and had to rely on an early Handre Pollard penalty for their only points in the first half.

In a frantically paced second half, they came within one try of regaining the lead before late penalties made the game safe for New Zealand.

"We can't moan about this performance. They really played well, I think the referee was good. And we just have to work really hard," said a magnanimous Springbok coach Rassie Erasmus.

South Africa will still feel confident of qualifying from a group that also includes Italy, Namibia and Canada but are almost certain to finish second in

the pool after yesterday's defeat.

"It was a heck of a test match," said All Black captain Kieran Read. "It was a full 80 minutes right to the end there that we had to work," said the skipper, who said the conditions were "tough."

'HANDLING ERRORS'

For the fourth time in as many matches at this World Cup, the team that scored first finished second.

Perhaps it was nerves, but play was marred by many handling errors from both sides early in the contest.

South Africa's reputed staunch defence was exposed by 26 missed tackles in the first half as the All Blacks' pace proved too much.

After Springboks backrower Duane Vermeulen was given the

honour in his 50th Test to lead the teams on to the field, Pollard quickly had the South Africans on the board with a handy penalty.

With the deft kicking of Faf de Klerk backed by the muscle of the South African pack, the All Blacks were pinned deep in their own half for most of the first quarter until a Richie Mo'unga breakout brought them into the game for the first time.

Although South Africa saved that try, Mo'unga landed the penalty to level the scores and almost immediately set up the next scoring move, as a chip kick to right wing Sevu Reece launched a 60-metre move that finished with a try for left wing George Bridge.

Influential centre Anton Lienert-Brown sparked New Zealand's next long-range counter-

attack which saw lock Scott Barrett pop up in support for the try. It took South Africa until the eighth minute of the second half to score their first try when Pieter-Steph du Toit brushed aside Aaron Smith to score near the posts.

Pollard narrowed the gap further with a 40-metre drop goal to have the South Africans a try away from taking the lead.

But late penalties by Mo'unga and man-of-the-match Beauden Barrett gave the All Blacks a 10-point safety net.

"Today was a big game for both sides and fortunately for us, we came out on top," said All Black coach Steve Hansen.

"It was another titanic struggle between New Zealand and South Africa and hopefully the people watching here today enjoyed it and got excited by it."

PREVIEW

England's Vunipola set for 'emotional' opener against Tonga

AFP
Sapporo, Japan

Billy Vunipola knows he will be the cause of split loyalties when England open their 2019 World Cup campaign against Tonga in Sapporo today.

Not only are Vunipola's parents Tongan, his father Fe'ao, a hooker, and uncle Elisi, then the captain and fly-half, played for Tonga against England at the 1999 World Cup. That match, which Billy watched, saw England enjoy a 101-10 win after Tonga had prop Ngalu Taufu'ou sent off after 35 minutes for punching. Billy and brother Mako were raised in Wales after their father took up a contract with Pontypool. They were later educated in England and the latest generation of rugby-playing Vunipola brothers opted to represent the Red Rose.

"I am Tongan, my parents are and my grandparents are so it will be very emotional," said Billy Vunipola. "I have to get my head right. With the country there will be split loyalties," the powerhouse No 8 added.

"They want Tonga to win and I want England to win."

Billy Vunipola will be the only member of his family involved in today's match as Mako, an England prop, continues his recovery from hamstring surgery. Tonga coach Toutai Kefu, when told Vunipola still felt Tongan, quipped: "Well he should be playing for us then."

Jones has picked his strongest available side for a match title contenders England are expected to win well against a Tonga team who only a few weeks ago suffered a 92-7 thrashing by reigning world champions New Zealand in a warm-up match.

But Jones said there was no question of taking Tonga lightly, hence a midfield trio of George Ford, captain Owen Farrell and dynamic centre Manu Tuilagi, with the likes of Vunipola and Maro Itoje powering the pack.

"I think World Cups are about always picking your strongest



England flanker Billy Vunipola.

team, for that game," said Jones. "That's the only game we're worried about."

Jones is a seasoned World Cup campaigner, having been the coach of his native Australia when they lost the 2003 final to England before becoming a consultant to 2007 champions South Africa. And four years ago he oversaw one of the great World Cup upsets when Japan beat the Springboks. Yet for all his experience, Jones said: "I'm massively nervous and I'm massively excited."

"We control the preparation for the games and every coach - all 20 coaches out here - is having this conversation now. They all think they've done a great job preparing their team, but we don't know, do we?"

"I love it. If I didn't want that, I'd have a job where I could catch the bus at eight o'clock every morning, wear the same suit, take a briefcase and have my packed lunch," he added.

"I could do that and I'd probably do it pretty well, but I love this part of it: you work really hard to prepare a team and then you don't know what is going to happen."

Part of that preparation for what will be just the second rugby union match at the Sapporo Dome has involved speaking to the England football team that played and won there, 1-0 against Argentina, during the 2002 soccer World Cup.

Scotland scent World Cup upset over Ireland

Ireland may go into the Rugby World Cup ranked number one in the world, but Scotland are not short of confidence and scent a possible upset in their opening Pool A match today. Hooker Stuart Mclnally will captain the most experienced Test team in Scotland rugby history with 630 caps, considerably more than the previous record of 581 against England in 2011 and France in 2003.

"To get a squad that has this experience for such a big game is a real bonus," coach Gregor Townsend said of his side ranked seventh in the world. "Experience is important. Experience with form, recent form, and really good physical shape makes it even more valuable and that is what we have with this group this weekend."

Townsend has close to his top match-day 23 available, including a backline stacked with British and Irish Lions, while Ireland are beset by injury with Rob Kearney, Robbie Henshaw and Keith Earls all missing. The loss of their combined experience could be a telling factor when Scots fly-half Finn Russell starts directing play at the International Stadium Yokohama.

Although Scotland have lost six of their past seven games against Ireland, Townsend said they are coming into form at the right time. "We have had two of our best ever training sessions, so as a coach, you get excited about things like that," he said. In the third match of the day Italy will take on Namibia.

FOCUS

France and Australia survive huge scares

AFP
Tokyo

France and Australia both survived huge scares yesterday as the Rugby World Cup roared into life ahead of the heavyweight clash between defending champions New Zealand and South Africa.

A last-ditch penalty miss by Argentina's Emiliano Boffelli spared France's blushes as they scraped home 23-21, after Australia recovered from nine points down to beat a formidable Fiji 39-21. The back-to-back thrillers on the first full day of action set up the much-anticipated clash between the All Blacks and the Springboks, considered a potential precursor of the November 2 final.

Kieran Read's All Blacks are chasing an unprecedented third straight world title, but come up against a Springboks team in the ascendancy under coach Rassie Erasmus.

After a tense start in Tokyo,



Australia's prop Scott Sio carries the ball during their Pool 'D' match against Fiji in Sapporo yesterday. (AFP)

France clicked and they showed slick hands and brilliant running as Gael Fickou went over on the right and Antoine Dupont dotted down four minutes later.

The flawless boot of Romain

Ntamack pushed Les Bleus out to a 20-3 lead at the break but Argentina came storming back with two near-identical catch-and-drive tries to Guido Petti Pagadizaval and Julian Montoya.

Benjamin Urdapilleta slotted two penalties to give Argentina a 21-20 lead but Camille Lopez's cool drop goal put France back in front, and it was the unfortunate Boffelli who skewed his penalty



Action from France-Argentina match in Tokyo yesterday. (AFP)

narrowly wide. Earlier in Sapporo, Fiji put in some thunderous hits and led 21-12 early in the second half before replacement scrum-half Will Genia inspired Australia's recovery and bonus-

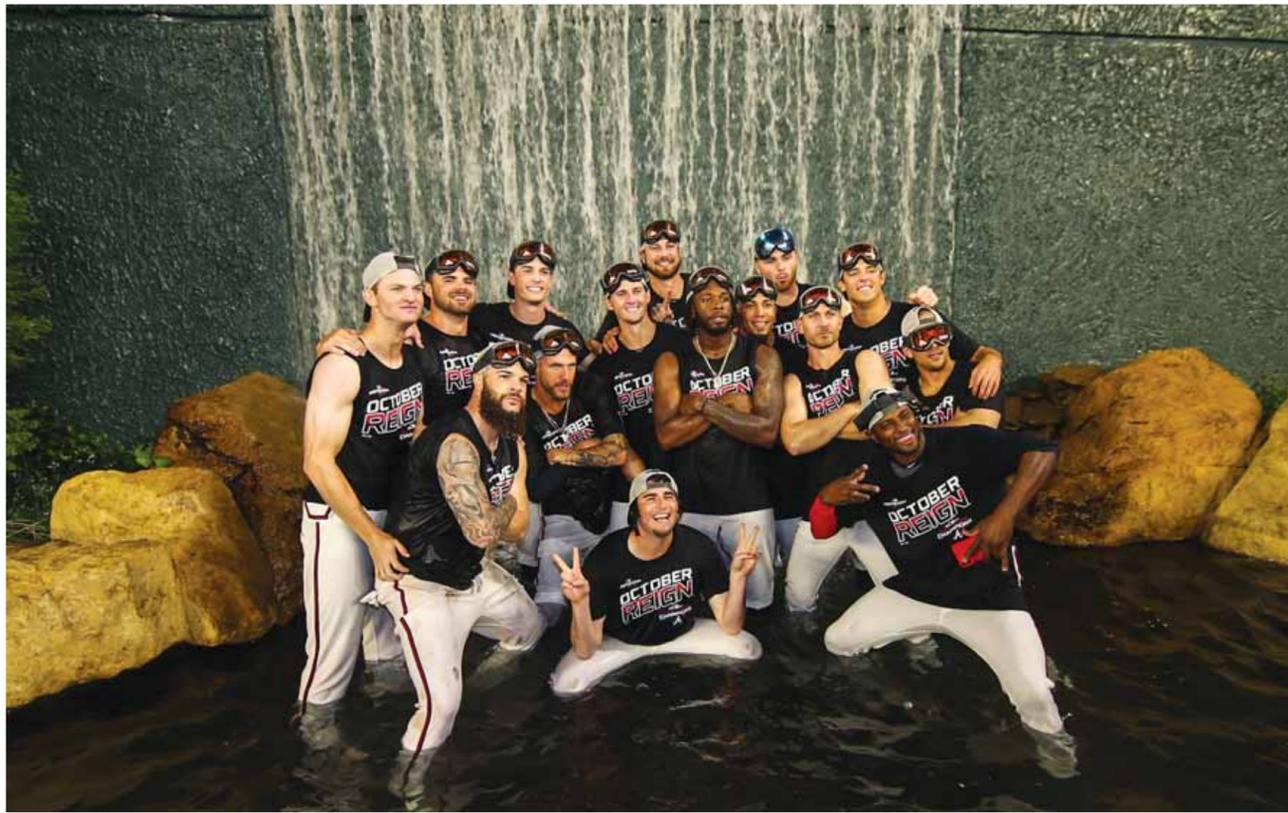
point win. Tolu Latu crashed over twice, and Samu Serevi and Marika Korobete also crossed in the second half following scores by Michael Hooper and Reece Hodge in a helter-skelter first pe-

riod. "They're such a dangerous team, we knew that very well," said Wallabies coach Michael Cheika. "It's what we expected (but) we probably didn't expect to be so far behind."

MLB

Braves clinch NL East title with win over Giants

'Nobody gave us a chance early, and it was good to see these guys get on a roll. That was big'



Atlanta Braves players celebrate in the fountain behind centre field after clinching the NL East division after defeating the San Francisco Giants at SunTrust Park in Atlanta. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

Reuters
Atlanta

Mike Foltynewicz pitched eight shutout innings to help the Atlanta Braves to a 6-0 win over the visiting San Francisco Giants, which clinched the organisation's second straight National League East title. The Braves notched their 19th division championship, tying them with the New York Yankees for the most in the majors since the divisional era started in 1969. The Yankees won their 19th title on Thursday. The victory also ensures the Braves of home-field advantage for the NL Division Series. "Last year I kept running around with blinders on wondering if we were good enough to pull it off," Braves manager Brian Snitker said of winning a division title. "This year, as went, it was like we're pretty good. Nobody gave us a chance early, and it was good to see these guys get on a roll. Just took care of business, winning a lot of first games and winning a lot of series. That was big." Foltynewicz (8-5) allowed three hits and one walk in perhaps his best effort of the season. He struck out seven. Foltynewicz won his seventh straight decision, and the Braves have won the last 12 games that he has started. Over his last four starts, Foltynewicz is 4-0 with a 0.69

RESULTS

Braves	6-0	Giants
Cardinals	2-1	Cubs
Nationals	6-4	Marlins
Brewers	10-1	Pirates
Indians	5-2	Phillies
Athletics	8-0	Rangers
Rays	5-4	Red Sox
Blue Jays	4-3	Yankees
Astros	6-4	Angels
Dodgers	12-5	Rockies
Mets	8-1	Reds
Twins	4-3	Royals
D'backs	9-0	Padres
White Sox	10-1	Tigers
Orioles	5-3	Mariners

ERA (two earned runs in 26 innings). Josh Tomlin pitched a scoreless ninth inning to nail down the game in a non-save situation. He retired Alex Dickerson on a fly to centre field for the final out. The Atlanta offence was led by Ronald Acuna Jr. The centre fielder was 2-for-2 with a double, a home run, two walks, three runs and two RBIs. Acuna has scored 126 runs, moving him within five of the modern-era franchise record of 131 set by Dale Murphy in 1983. San Francisco rookie Tyler Beede (5-10)

took the loss, pitching six innings and allowing six runs on seven hits, two walks and five strikeouts. Beede had won consecutive 1-0 decisions but had no luck in his first career appearance against the Braves. The Braves scored a run in the first on Freddie Freeman's sacrifice fly, giving him 120 RBIs. Atlanta made it 2-0 in the third when Acuna doubled and scored on a single by Ozzie Albies, who finished 2-for-4. The Braves padded the lead with a pair of two-run homers against Beede. Acuna cleared the fence in right-centre field in the fifth inning and Brian McCann hit his 12th homer in the sixth.

MOLINA HELPS STREAKING CARDS EDGE REELING CUBS

Yadier Molina had three hits, including a two-run single, and the visiting St. Louis Cardinals held on to defeat the Chicago Cubs 2-1 on Friday for their third straight win. The National League Central leaders dealt the Cubs their fourth straight loss. Chicago trails St. Louis by five games in the division and has fallen three games behind the Washington Nationals and two games below the Milwaukee Brewers in the wild-card race. Ryan Helsley (2-0) picked up the win in relief as the St. Louis bullpen turned in five scoreless innings. Carlos Martinez got the final two outs for his 22nd save. St. Louis won despite being outth 9-4.

Both teams squandered offensive opportunities as the Cardinals went 1-for-11 with runners in scoring position and the Cubs were 1-for-9.

Chicago's Kyle Schwarber led off the eighth inning with a bunt single against Andrew Miller, but Willson Contreras grounded into a double play. Schwarber, Jason Heyward and Nicholas Castellanos had two hits each for the Cubs.

St. Louis starter Michael Wacha allowed a run on five hits over four innings. He was helped out of two jams when Chicago grounded into double plays, including with one out and the bases loaded in the third inning. Wacha also benefited from a line-drive double play by Castellanos in the first after Anthony Rizzo led off with a walk.

Starter Alec Mills tossed 4 2/3 shutout innings for the Cubs, allowing two hits and striking out six. The Cubs took a 1-0 lead in the second when Schwarber doubled, advanced to third on a groundout and scored on second baseman Tommy Edman's one-out error off a David Bote grounder.

The Cardinals took a 2-1 lead in the sixth. Paul Goldschmidt and Marcell Ozuna drew walks against reliever David Phelps (2-1), and Steve Cishek came on to face Matt Carpenter. Carpenter walked to load the bases and Molina followed with a single to centre, scoring Goldschmidt and Ozuna.

NBA

NBA passes stricter tampering, salary cap regulations

AFP
New York

NBA team owners passed stricter measures to force compliance with player tampering and salary cap rules on Friday after a wild off-season where several top stars changed clubs.

The tougher regulations provide for fines of up to \$10 million, voiding of contracts, forfeiting of NBA draft selections and suspensions of team executives who seek to attract players while they are under contract to another team.

"We need to ensure that we're creating a culture of compliance in this league and our teams want to know they're competing on a level playing field and frankly don't want to feel disadvantaged if they are adhering to our existing rules," NBA commissioner Adam Silver said.

"What we are really seeking again is a cultural change in the league, that all the partners in the league are essentially saying this is the kind of league we operate."

The issue came to a head after stars Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving joined the Brooklyn Nets shortly after becoming free agents - when the official negotiating period for free agents and clubs had barely begun.

Other deals that were eventually consummated came to light before talks were even supposed to start.

There was also concern about players talking with each other about possible moves, such as Kawhi Leonard wanting Paul George to join him on the Los Angeles Clippers while George had a contract with the Oklahoma City Thunder.

"The ultimate goal here is to ensure compliance and to ensure that there's that appropriate tension that exists at the team," Silver said. "So there is sort of a significant threat that if a team doesn't

comply that there will be consequences."

Among the ways the league will toughen the tampering rules is a random audit of communications for five NBA teams, Silver saying he has the ability to confiscate people's communication devices should he desire under the new regulations.

"I'm not looking to take devices," Silver said. "We do have the power to take people's devices. That is not something certainly in the first instance we would be looking to do. I think we can create the appropriate culture without certainly on a random basis people feeling that's necessary. We have lots of other tools available to us."

FINES INEFFECTIVE

Fines, Silver said, have proven ineffective at deterring violations.

"There's a general sense in this league that among the tools we have to ensure compliance, fining authority unto itself may be one of the least effective tools," Silver said.

"So within the power that already has been vested in the league, there is the ability to impact competition directly by suspending executives, taking away draft picks and voiding contracts."

While not vowing a fool-proof system, Silver warned potential violators that, "We believe through these tools, we're dramatically going to increase the likelihood that we're going to catch you."

Some issues the league wants to examine, such as changing the dates for free agency, must be done in conjunction with the players union. But moves such as George leaving the Thunder for the Clippers show how much influence star players can have on other players and by extension, their teams.

An individual player's ability to change the fortunes of a team "provides enormous leverage for that player," Silver said.

Carter signs with Hawks for historic 22nd NBA campaign

Vince Carter is set to make NBA history this season after signing with the Atlanta Hawks on Friday, the 42-year-old swingman set for his record 22nd league campaign.

Carter will become the first NBA player to compete in 22 seasons when he takes the court for the first time for the Hawks and his first appearance in a game in 2020 will make him the first player to compete in four different decades. Among active NBA players, Carter leads with 1,481 games played.

That's fifth on the all-time list, 130 shy of matching Robert Parish's career record and 79 behind second-place Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Only Los Angeles Lakers star LeBron James has more baskets or minutes played among active NBA players than Carter's 9,186 hoops and 45,491 minutes. He also ranks third among active players in 3-point baskets with 2,229 after Golden State's Stephen Curry and Milwaukee's Kyle Korver. Carter was the 1999 NBA Rookie of the Year with the Toronto Raptors after being the fifth pick overall in the 1998 NBA Draft. He made eight consecutive NBA All-Star squads from 2000-2007.

Dubbed "Air Canada" in his early days for his high-leaping acrobatic dunks, he helped the 2000 US Olympic capture gold at the Sydney Olympics. Carter, who turns 43 in January, has played mostly a reserve role in recent seasons, making nine starts in 76 appearances for the Hawks last season, when he averaged 7.4 points, 2.6 rebounds and 1.1 assists a game.

NFL

Patriots release Brown

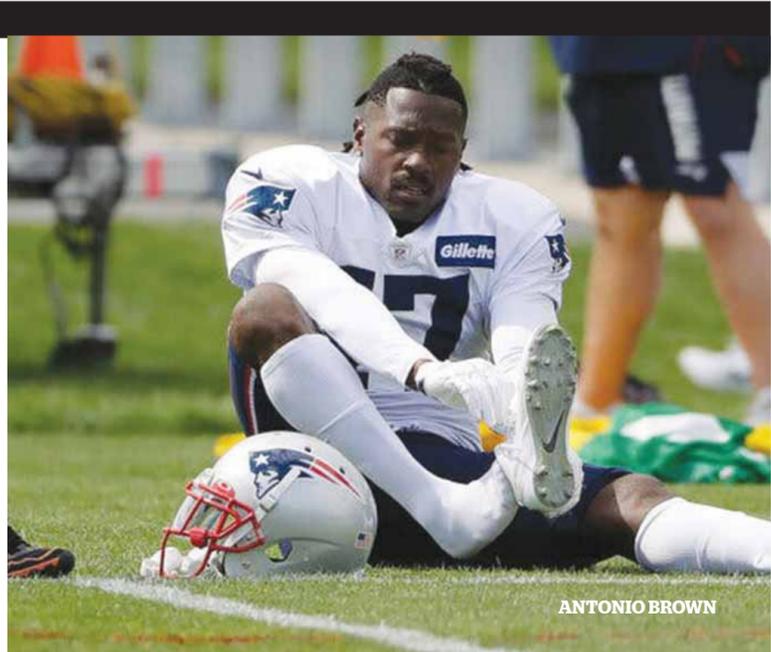
Reuters
New York

The Antonio Brown era in New England is over. The Patriots announced they are cutting the controversial wide receiver on Friday afternoon, just five days after Brown caught four passes for 56 yards and scored a touchdown in his debut with the team. "The New England Patriots are releasing Antonio Brown," the team said in a statement. "We appreciate the hard work of many people over the past 11 days, but we feel it is best to move in a different direction at this time." The NFL later issued a statement that read: "Antonio Brown was released today by the New England Patriots and is currently an unrestricted free agent. Our office is presently investigating multiple allegations, some of

which are the subject of pending litigation. We have as yet made no findings regarding these issues. The investigation is ongoing and will be pursued vigorously and expeditiously. "As long as Mr. Brown is a free agent, placement on the Commissioner's exempt list is not appropriate. If he is signed by a club, such placement may become appropriate at any time depending on the status of the investigation. Upon the conclusion of the investigation, he may also be subject to discipline if the investigation finds that he has violated the law or league policies." Patriots coach Bill Belichick abruptly left his news conference earlier Friday after being asked repeated questions concerning Brown. "I know there are questions about Antonio," Belichick said, via NBCSportsBoston.com. "We take all the situations with our

team very seriously. There are some things we're looking into." After answering a couple of general questions that stemmed from Brown's situation, Belichick said he would talk football. After another Brown-related question was asked, Belichick said: "I'm good. Thank you." An offseason full of tumult and controversy carried over into the regular season for Brown. On Thursday, Sports Illustrated reported that a female artist who leveled claims earlier this week that Brown made unwanted sexual advances before firing her contacted the NFL claiming the 31-year-old wide receiver sent her "intimidating and threatening" texts. Britney Taylor, Brown's former trainer, filed a civil suit last week accusing him of three incidents of sexual assault or rape over a two-year period from 2017-18. According to multiple reports, the league met with

Taylor for 10 hours on Monday as it investigates the accusations, and a meeting with Brown was expected at some point. The Patriots signed Brown earlier this month just hours after the Oakland Raiders released him. It was reportedly a one-year, \$15 million deal with a \$9 million signing bonus. Prior to his release, Brown spent training camp in and out of Raiders facilities, rehabbing a frostbite-like condition on his feet after a cryotherapy mishap, filing grievances with the NFL over his helmet, arguing with team management (reportedly calling general manager Mike Mayock a cracker), and posting a recorded conversation with Raiders coach Jon Gruden to YouTube. In 10 NFL seasons (the first nine with Pittsburgh), Brown has caught 841 balls for 11,263 yards and 75 touchdowns. He is a seven-time Pro Bowl selection and four-time All-Pro.



ANTONIO BROWN

FORMULA 1

Ferrari's Leclerc on pole for Singapore Grand Prix

'I don't know where Ferrari picked up their pace but they did a great job'

AFP
Singapore

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc secured pole position for the Singapore Grand Prix yesterday as he looks to claim a stunning hat-trick of wins after triumphs in Belgium and Italy.

The 21-year-old will be joined on the front row by championship leader Lewis Hamilton in a Mercedes, with Leclerc's teammate Sebastian Vettel rounding out the top three, ahead of Red Bull's Max Verstappen and Valtteri Bottas.

Despite winning the last two races on power-friendly tracks, Ferrari had been given little chance of competing under the floodlights at the demanding 23-turn layout in Singapore.

But Leclerc and Vettel tore up the script to gatecrash what was expected to be a Mercedes and Red Bull party.

"I'm extremely happy about today. It was a good lap but I lost it a few times," Leclerc said after completing a 1:36.217 second final lap.

"I have to thank the team. We brought some new bits that worked properly. I worked hard after a bad Friday and today it paid off," added Leclerc, who recorded his fifth pole position of the season.

Hamilton holds a 63-point lead over Bottas of Mercedes in the title race with seven rounds remaining.

The Briton said he would adopt an aggressive approach to Sunday's race in search of a ninth victory of the season, as he seeks a sixth world championship.

"I don't know where Ferrari picked up their pace but they did a great job," said Hamilton, who lapped in 1:36.408.

"I'm really happy to be on the front row with them. Tomorrow we can be aggressive."

Vettel has suffered an erratic season while his rookie teammate has shone for the Italian team. The German was quickest in the first half of the final part of qualifying until Leclerc and Hamilton edged past him.

"The final attempt should have been better but I was able to improve run by run. Maybe I peaked too early," Vettel said.

Red Bull's Alex Albon will start sixth on the grid, ahead of Carlos Sainz, Daniel Ricciardo, Nico Hulkenberg and Lando Norris.

Dense smog from forest fires



(L to R) Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton, Ferrari's Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc and Ferrari's German driver Sebastian Vettel pose together after finishing second, first and third respectively in the qualifying for the Singapore Grand Prix yesterday. (AFP)

in neighbouring Indonesia had floated over Singapore in the past week, sparking concerns the F1 could be affected. Air quality hovered around "unhealthy" levels in parts of the city Saturday evening but only a light haze was visible and did not affect the race.

LATE SURGE

The late season surge represents a vindication of sorts for Ferrari, who were impressive in pre-season testing but failed to take that form to the track until after the series returned from its summer break at Spa. "It's even better than we hoped," Ferrari

boss Mattia Binotto told reporters. "The race is tomorrow and we shouldn't forget that but it's always nice to start at the front in Singapore. I still believe Mercedes are very strong."

His counterpart at Mercedes, Toto Wolff, was surprised by Ferrari's pace. "This is a circuit

we thought the Red Bulls and Mercedes would battle for pole. The Ferraris are fast, they did a good job and we have to get our act together tomorrow," the Austrian said.

"The statistics are against us but the race has not started," he added.

MOTOGP

Marquez, Quartararo cat-and-mouse act hits Aragon front row

AFP
Alcañiz, Spain

Marc Marquez is a red-hot favourite to win the Aragon MotoGP after roaring to pole position for his home Grand Prix yesterday where the Spaniard will renew his struggle with French tyro Fabio Quartararo on the front row, with Maverick Vinales third.

Reigning world champion Marquez has won at Aragon for the past three seasons and the 26-year-old set a blistering pace in qualifying before taking pole, 0.327sec ahead of Quartararo.

Last week, Marquez ghosted along just behind Quartararo for 18 laps at the San Marino GP before finally springing past the Yamaha youngster on the last lap to clinch a captivating win.

It was his seventh victory of the season and Marquez explained he had been determined not to come second again after being pipped on the line in the previous two races at Silverstone and the Dutch GP. On Sunday, fans at the 5.077km Aragon circuit, just 160km from Honda rider Marquez's hometown Cervera, can anticipate another mouth-watering duel between the pair.

"Fabio is ready to win a race and, starting next year, fight for the championship," Marquez said after last week's race. Quartararo said he was surprised by his last-ditch qualification for the front row.

"Honestly I did not expect to set this lap time. I was on the limit everywhere and I said okay this lap is really impor-

STARTING GRIDS

1ST ROW

1. Marc Marquez (ESP/Honda)
 2. Fabio Quartararo (FRA/Yamaha-SRT)
 3. Maverick Vinales (ESP/Yamaha)
- 2ND ROW**
4. Jack Miller (AUS/Ducati-Pramac)
 5. Aleix Espargaro (ESP/Aprilia)
 6. Valentino Rossi (ITA/Yamaha)
- 3RD ROW**
7. Cal Crutchlow (GBR/Honda-LCR)
 8. Franco Morbidelli (ITA/Yamaha-SRT)
 9. Joan Mir (ESP/Suzuki)
- 4TH ROW**
10. Andrea Dovizioso (ITA/Ducati)
 11. Andrea Iannone (ITA/Aprilia)
 12. Pol Espargaro (ESP/KTM)

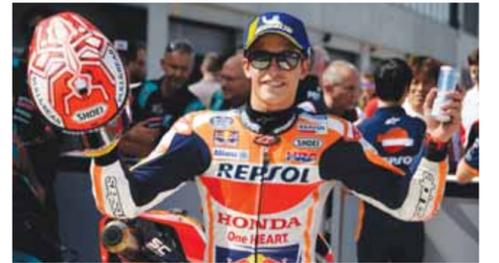
tant to be on the front row so I said either I crash or I am in the front row," he said of his time on the damp track.

Dauntingly, while Quartararo left it all out there Marquez suggested he himself had held back.

"I said let's do a good lap, but also you need to control the risks. I feel really good. I feel much better than in Misano for example."

Also on the front row is in-form Spaniard Vinales, who started San Marino on pole and came third.

In the current world standings, Marquez leads Andrea Dovizioso of Ducati by 93 points with six races left to run. The off-colour Italian however placed 10th in qualifying on his Ducati yesterday.



Repsol Honda Team's Spanish rider Marc Marquez celebrates getting the pole position at the Aragon Grand Prix yesterday. (AFP)

Thomas pulls out of world championships TT

Former Tour de France champion Geraint Thomas has pulled out of the men's time trial at the cycling World Championships in Yorkshire, where huge crowds are expected over the next nine days. An expert time trialist, Welshman Thomas was set to feature in Wednesday's run to Harrogate but will now focus on next Sunday's road race instead. "I've tried to get back into shape after my post-Tour break, but unfortunately I don't feel in good enough shape to perform to my best," said Thomas, who has struggled to attain the fitness level that saw him win the 2018 Tour de France. "So the decision was made with my coach and Matt Brammeier at British Cycling to skip the TT and commit to the team for the road race."

TENNIS

Federer beats Kyrgios to put Europe ahead

AFP
Geneva

Roger Federer edged out Nick Kyrgios in a super tie-break to give Europe a 5-3 lead after the opening session of the second day of the Laver Cup in Geneva yesterday. The 20-time Grand Slam champion, who won his first match alongside Alexander Zverev in Friday's doubles tie, beat Australian Kyrgios 6-7 (5/7), 7-5, 10-7 to the delight of his home crowd. Bjorn Borg's holders had seen Team World draw level earlier with John Isner's victory over Zverev.

The 38-year-old Federer had won his last two matches against Kyrgios in straight sets, but dropped the opener in a tie-break. But he hit back to level the match with a break in game 11 of the second set, before holding off a late Kyrgios rally in the super tie-break to take it on his third match point.

Later, Rafael Nadal will play his first matches of the weekend when he takes on Milos Raonic in the singles, before teaming up with Stefanos Tsitsipas to face Kyrgios and Jack Sock in



Team Europe's Roger Federer in action during his singles Laver Cup match against Team World's Nick Kyrgios in Geneva yesterday. (Reuters)

doubles. Earlier yesterday, Isner fought back from a set down to beat Zverev 6-7 (2/7), 6-4, 10-1 and haul Team World level at 3-3 after Europe led by two points after the opening day.

The big-serving American lost a first-set tie-break, but hit back before racing through the

super breaker in style. "Maybe we're turning the tables just a little bit," said world number 20 Isner, the highest-ranked player in the visitors' team. "Team World is in this and we're here to win, so let's get it going."

The scoring system sees one point awarded for each win on

the first day, two points given for each victory on the second day, and three points on offer in each match on today's final day.

This year is the first time the tournament has been played since being added to the ATP Tour. Europe won the 2018 edition 13-8 in Chicago.

Medvedev reaches fifth straight ATP final in St Petersburg

Home favourite Daniil Medvedev reached his fifth consecutive final yesterday by beating Belarusian Egor Gerasimov in the last four of the ATP event in Saint Petersburg. The 23-year-old top seed won 7-5, 7-5 against the world number 119 to continue his excellent form which also saw him lose an epic US Open final to Rafael Nadal earlier this month. Medvedev, the world number four, broke in the 11th games of each set and will face Croatia's Borna Coric in today's final. It was the third title of the season for 20-year-old Coric beat Portugal's Joao Sousa 3-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-1. It was the third straight match that Coric had won from a set down.

"I don't like (losing the first set), either. I would love to be in two sets. Maybe one day, hopefully it's going to come," he said. The fourth seed was facing defeat late in the second set, but he saved three break points in the 11th game to secure a tie-break, which he won before racing through the deciding set.

KENIN BATTLES PAST

STOSUR TO CLAIM GUANGZHOU CROWN
American Sofia Kenin fought back from a set down to overcome former US Open champion Samantha Stosur 6-7(4), 6-4, 6-2 and win the Guangzhou International Women's Open title yesterday. It was the third title of the season for 20-year-old Kenin following triumphs in Hobart and Mallorca but the third seed was made to work hard by the Australian wildcard, playing in her first singles final in 2-1/2 years. Kenin raced to a 4-2 lead before the

35-year-old Stosur, who has dropped to 129th in the world rankings, rallied to win the opening set on a tiebreak. World number 20 Kenin, who reached the last 16 at the French Open this year, found herself two games away from defeat at 4-4 in the second set but switched gears to drag the match into a decider. Stosur was unable to match the intensity of her younger rival and her hopes of a first singles title since her victory in Strasbourg two years ago faded as Kenin raced to a 5-1 lead before closing out the match on serve.



Winner Sofia Kenin (right) and second-placed Samantha Stosur (left) pose with their trophies at the Guangzhou Open in Guangzhou, China, yesterday. (AFP)

BUNDESLIGA

Lewandowski and Coutinho fire Bayern to easy win

RB Leipzig maintain top spot after their 3-0 victory at Werder Bremen



Bayern Munich's Robert Lewandowski (left) celebrates with teammate Philippe Coutinho after scoring against Cologne during Bundesliga match in Munich yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
Berlin

Philippe Coutinho's first Bayern Munich goal and a brace from Robert Lewandowski helped the German champions climb to second in the Bundesliga with a 4-0 thrashing of 10-man Cologne yesterday. Poland star striker Lewandowski put Bayern ahead with just 150 seconds gone at the Allianz Arena after Joshua Kimmich split the Cologne defence.

He then doubled the hosts' lead with a header from a corner at the start of the second half to take his league tally to nine in five games. Coutinho, on loan from Barcelona, converted a penalty on the hour at the second attempt, after Lewandowski gave the Brazilian the chance despite being on a hat-trick.

"It was a spontaneous decision, we didn't talk about it before the game," Lewandowski about giving Coutinho the

spot-kick. "It was important for him here at the Allianz Arena, for the future and his confidence. He is a great player and we must all help him."

Kingsley Ehizibue had been shown a straight red card just before the penalty for bringing down Coutinho in the area when the Brazilian was one-on-one with Cologne stopper Timo Horn. Coutinho capped a superb display by setting up Ivan Perisic to slot the final goal on 73 minutes as Bayern limbed from fourth.

Having also netted in the mid-week Champions League win over Red Star Belgrade, Lewandowski has scored in each of Bayern's last seven games with 11 goals in all competitions. He is the first to score in the first five Bundesliga games since Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang for Borussia Dortmund four years ago.

Bayern briefly topped the table before RB Leipzig replaced them in first place despite finishing with ten men in their 3-0 win at Werder Bremen. A first-half header by defender Willi Orban and a stunning

free-kick by playmaker Marcel Sabitzer saw Leipzig go 2-0 up before midfielder Konrad Laimer was sent off for a second yellow card for the last 26 minutes.

Leipzig grabbed a late third when Germany striker Timo Werner sparked an attack finished by Uruguay substitute Marcelo Saracchi to score his first goal since joining from Argentinian side River Plate. Bayer Leverkusen bounced back from their shock Champions League defeat to Lokomotiv Moscow in mid-week with a 2-0 win over Union Berlin. Kevin Volland and Lucas Alario scored inside the opening half-hour as Leverkusen responded after director of sport Rudi Voller had accused them of being "scared" against Lokomotiv.

Second-placed Freiburg wasted the chance to go top as forward Lucas Hoelzer gave them the lead only for striker Florian Niederlechner to equalise for Augsburg in a 1-1 draw. Hertha Berlin climbed off the foot of the table with a nervy 2-1 home win over Paderborn, who took their

place at the bottom of the league. Winger Javairo Dilrosun weaved past defenders to slot home on 10 minutes before forward Marius Wolf netted in the second half at the Olympic Stadium before striker Ben Zolinski pulled a goal back for Paderborn.

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA RESULTS

Bayern Munich 4 (Lewandowski 3, 48, Coutinho 62-pen, Perisic 73) Cologne 0; Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Volland 20, Alario 25) Union Berlin 0; Hertha Berlin 2 (Dilrosun 10, Wolf 52) Paderborn 1 (Zolinski 54); Freiburg 1 (Hoelzer 24) Augsburg 1 (Niederlechner 39); Werder Bremen 0 RB Leipzig 3 (Orban 13, Sabitzer 35, Saracchi 83)

Playing today: Borussia Moenchengladbach v Fortuna Duesseldorf (1330), Eintracht Frankfurt v Borussia Dortmund (1600)

Tomorrow: Wolfsburg v Hoffenheim (1830)

Played Friday: Schalke 2 (Serdar 36, Harit 89) Mainz 1 (Onisiwo 76)

SERIE A

Ramsey, Ronaldo put Juventus on top

AFP
Milan

Aaron Ramsey's first Juventus goal on his maiden start and Cristiano Ronaldo's spot-kick winner saw the Italian champions seal a comeback 2-1 win over Verona yesterday that put them top of Serie A ahead of the Milan derby.

Welsh international Ramsey pulled Juventus level in the 31st minute in Turin in reply to Miguel Veloso's early Verona goal, with a well-taken Ronaldo penalty ensuring all three points for the hosts just after the break. It got Maurizio Sarri's side back winning after last weekend's Serie A stalemate at Fiorentina and a 2-2 Champions League draw at Atletico Madrid midweek. Sarri's side move one point ahead of Inter Milan at the top of the table before Antonio Conte's side were playing city rivals AC Milan late last night.

Italian goalkeeping legend Gianluigi Buffon returned to the Juventus goal after spending a season in Paris Saint-Germain to match Paolo Maldini's Italian record of 902 club matches. Buffon's appearances have been spread across three clubs - Parma, Juventus and PSG - with Maldini having spent his entire career with Serie A rivals Milan.

But the 41-year-old - who played his last game for Juventus also against Verona here in May 2018 - could not keep a clean

sheet and was beaten by Veloso after 21 minutes. Amid confusion in front of the Juve goal after Simone Di Carmine missed a Verona penalty, and Darko Lazovic's rebound rattled the bar, Veloso pounced to rifle a long range strike past Buffon.

But Ramsey got the champions back on level terms 10 minutes later on his full debut after coming on late against Atletico, with a deflected effort past Verona goalkeeper Marco Silvestri. Ronaldo put Juventus ahead from the spot with just his second goal this season three minutes after the restart, having missed two chances before the break.

Verona kept pushing with Buffon denying Mattia Zaccagni and Lazovic on front of goal after 89 minutes and Veloso denied a brace by the post, but Juve held on to take the three points. Carlo Ancelotti's Napoli travel south to promoted Lecce on Sunday after seeing off European champions Liverpool 2-0 on Tuesday.

SERIE A RESULTS

Udinese 0 Brescia 1 (Romulo 57); Juventus 2 (Ramsey 31, Ronaldo 49-pen) Verona 1 (Veloso 20)

Playing today (all times GMT): Sassuolo v SPAL (1030), Bologna v Roma, Lecce v Napoli, Sampdoria v Torino (all 1300), Atalanta v Fiorentina (1600), Lazio v Parma (1845)

Played Friday: Cagliari 3 (Simone 46, Zapata 84-og, Joao Pedro 87) Genoa 1 (Kouame 83)



Juventus' midfielder Aaron Ramsey celebrates after scoring against Verona during the Serie A match. (AFP)

LEEDS FRUSTRATED AS DERBY SNATCH LATE POINT

London: Championship leaders Leeds were forced to settle for a 1-1 against Derby after conceding a last-gasp equaliser at Elland Road yesterday. Marcelo Bielsa's side should have been out of sight after creating chance after chance while bossing possession. But instead they had only Max Lowe's 20th-minute own goal to show for their efforts. Crucially, Mateusz Klich missed a second-half penalty for Leeds and Chris Martin made them pay in stoppage time with Derby's first meaningful shot.

It was another dose of Derby despair for Leeds, who also lost to the Rams - then managed by current Chelsea boss Frank Lampard - in the Championship play-off semi-finals last season.

Leeds remain top, on goal difference, after Swansea could only draw 0-0 at Bristol City following Jake Bidwell's red card for the visitors in the last minute. Preston sit third after a 1-0 win at Birmingham thanks to a 23rd-minute Sean Maguire goal. Nahki Wells scored twice as QPR beat

London rivals Millwall 2-1 at The Den to go fourth. On-loan Burnley striker Wells opened the scoring after 56 minutes and, after Shaun Hutchinson levelled in the 71st minute, Wells won it 60 seconds later following a howler from Lions keeper Bartosz Bialkowski. Ben Watson's strike gave Nottingham Forest a 1-0 win over Barnsley, while Kevin Stewart's first goal since May 2015 helped Hull win 3-0 at Luton, with Kamil Grosicki adding a late second and Dan Potts scoring a stoppage-time own goal.

LA LIGA

Atletico held by Celta Vigo



Atletico Madrid and Celta Vigo players clash during the La Liga match in Madrid yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP
Madrid

Atletico Madrid missed the chance to return to the top of La Liga yesterday as they were held to a goalless draw at home to Celta Vigo. After coming from two goals down to salvage a point against Juventus in the Champions League on Wednesday, Atletico failed to sustain the momentum in a match of few chances at the Wanda Metropolitano.

Atletico had capitalised on the stumbling starts of both Barcelona and Real Madrid by winning their opening three league games this season but they are now two without a victory, following last weekend's shock defeat away at Real Sociedad. They sit level on points with early front-runners Sevilla, who will host Real Madrid today.

Celta, meanwhile, sit 14th in the table, having won only one of their five games so far, leaving Atletico's coach Diego Simeone

with familiar questions to answer about his side's creativity and attacking threat. Summer signing Joao Felix started before being replaced by Alvaro Morata in the second half, the Spanish striker available again after recovering from a knee injury.

But neither Felix nor Morata, or their partner Diego Costa, could conjure up the decisive opening, with full-backs Renan Lodi and Kieran Trippier by far the team's most effective outlets in the final third. Atletico were the better side in the first half but only created a handful of chances, none of which could be classed as clear opportunities.

Trippier's early free-kick should have been headed in by Felipe Monteiro on his first start for the club but Ruben Blanco did well to react from five yards and push the ball over the crossbar. Ruben made another smart save to deny Lodi's driven effort from 30 yards while Felix found space at the back post soon after but his prodded finish was also tipped away. Celta held their own

either side of half-time as the match became increasingly high on intensity but low on quality. Costa wanted a penalty after the hour, claiming he was pushed after failing to make contact with Lodi's cross while Brais Mendez might have scored for Celta had Jan Oblak not been quick to shut down Santi Mina's superb ball through. Lodi fizzed a late shot past the far post but desperation turned to frustration in the closing stages. Lucas Olaza and Costa each picked up a yellow card for a skirmish after the final whistle.

LA LIGA RESULTS

Villarreal 2 (Cazorla 77-pen, Ontiveros 89) Valladolid 0; Levante 0 Eibar 0; Atletico Madrid 0 Celta Vigo 0

Playing today (all times GMT): Getafe v Mallorca (1000), Espanyol v Real Sociedad (1200), Valencia v Leganes (1400), Athletic Bilbao v Alaves (1630), Sevilla v Real Madrid (1900)

Played Friday: Osasuna 0 Real Betis 0

FOCUS

AAB chess tournament begins

Abdullah Abdulghani & Bros Co WLL (AAB), the exclusive distributor of Toyota and Lexus in Qatar, is conducting the AAB Chess Open FIDE-Rated tournament in collaboration with Qatar Chess Association (QCA). The tournament results are linked for individual rating purposes with the World Chess Federation (FIDE).

The AAB Chess tournament has invited all rated players to participate without any of the previous rating limitation of 2200. This exciting change makes the AAB Open one of the strongest chess tournaments in the country with high-rated players participating in it, with a woman Grandmaster also taking part. The tournament also encourages chess enthusiasts to participate as it also promotes new players to get rated or improve their rating on an international level. The tournament will be played in a classical chess format of nine rounds Swiss System and will run for two weekends.

R K Murugan, AAB's Acting CEO and COO - Automotive, opened the tournament with the first move in the presence of Hamad al-Tamimi, president of the QCA.

A substantial number of participants in the fourth edition of the tournament are FIDE rated. With the new format, the



Abdullah Abdulghani & Bros' acting CEO and COO of Automotive R K Murugan (centre) inaugurates the AAB Chess Open in the presence of QCA president Hamad al-Tamimi.

number of rated chess players is expected to increase. Since it began last year, around 30 chess players in Qatar have become rated and received their FIDE rating. The AAB Chess Open is a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative geared towards devel-

oping the community through sports. With the strong partnership with QCA, the tournament has created a meaningful impact on the lives of the young chess enthusiasts as well as adult players who are given the chance to get world rating.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Man City hit eight in Watford demolition, Leicester stun Spurs

City fall one goal short of equalling the biggest Premier League margin of victory

AFP
London

Manchester City powered to their record Premier League win as the champions scored five times in the first half of an incredible 8-0 thrashing of Watford, while Leicester enjoyed a VAR-assisted 2-1 victory over Tottenham yesterday.

Inspired by Bernardo Silva's hat-trick, Pep Guardiola's side ripped Watford to pieces at the Etihad Stadium, eclipsing a 7-0 success against Norwich in 2013 which stood as their previous biggest top-flight win. Although City fell one goal short of equalling the biggest Premier League margin of victory — Manchester United's 9-0 demolition of Ipswich in 1995 — their swaggering display was the perfect way to erase the bitter taste from last weekend's shock defeat at Norwich.

Second-placed City move to within two points of leaders Liverpool, who face Chelsea at Stamford Bridge today. "When you shoot on target five times for five goals — the quality of players we had made the difference," Guardiola said.

"What I like the most is normally when it's 5-0 at half time the second half is not serious, it's boring but we did the opposite and we were more aggressive and made a very good second half. People still don't understand, journalists, pundits, former players, losing games is part of life. We can lose the games but the important thing is the approach and how we react."

City had crushed Watford 6-0 in last season's FA Cup final and they picked up where they left off at Wembley with a goal inside the first minute at the Etihad Stadium. Kevin De Bruyne played a superb ball in from the right, leaving David Silva with the simple task of poking home from close range for his first goal of the season.

The champions doubled their lead in the seventh minute after Watford keeper Ben Foster conceded a penalty with a foul on Riyad Mahrez. Sergio Agüero coolly slotted in the spot-kick for his eighth goal in six games this term.

Guardiola had rested Raheem Sterling, but even without their star winger City were rampant and they made it three in the 12th minute when Mahrez's free-kick hit Watford's Tom Cleverley in the head and deflected past Foster. Astonishingly, City scored again in the 15th minute, De Bruyne's corner nodded on by Nicolas Otamendi for Bernardo to head home.

By the time Otamendi finished off Agüero's cross in the 18th minute, City had established the fastest 5-0 lead in the Premier League era. The joint biggest half-time lead in Premier League history wasn't enough for City and Bernardo struck again with a close-range finish after another flowing move in the 48th minute. Bernardo completed his first Premier League treble on the hour with a tap-in from De Bruyne's cross. De Bruyne set City's new record mark in the Premier League when the Belgian midfielder scored the eighth in the 85th minute.

At the King Power Stadium, Leicester



Manchester City's Bernardo Silva (centre) celebrates with teammate David Silva after scoring the team's seventh goal as Watford's Will Hughes (left) reacts during the English Premier match in Manchester yesterday. (AFP)

proved their credentials to gatecrash the top four as they came from behind to beat Tottenham. Harry's Kane's improvised 29th-minute opener as he stumbled before flicking home put Tottenham ahead.

However, the game swung Leicester's way after Tottenham defender Serge Aurier's goal midway through the second half was ruled out by the finest of margins for offside by VAR. The hosts built on that lift immediately as Ricardo Pereira equalised before James Maddison struck the winner from long range five minutes from time.

By contrast, Tottenham have now won just two of their first seven games of the season in all competitions and Mauricio Pochettino admitted the VAR controversy had played a role in their latest flop. Pochettino bemoaned the momentum swing given to Leicester by the long stoppage in play prior to Aurier's strike being ruled out for an extremely marginal off-

side against Son Heung-min. "The emotion of the game changed. The belief it gave to Leicester made things happen differently in the last 10 minutes," Pochettino said. "I'm only going to say that we all accept that system in the game and now I am not going to complain."

Burnley beat Norwich 2-0, with Chris Wood scoring in the 10th and 14th minutes. Sheffield United piled pressure on Everton manager Marco Silva, whose side were booed off after a 2-0 defeat at Goodison Park, the damage done by Yerry Mina's 40th-minute own goal and Lys Mousset's 79th-minute strike.

On Friday night, Bournemouth moved into fourth place with a 3-1 win against south-coast rivals Southampton. Eddie Howe's side took control in the local derby at St Mary's thanks to first half goals from Nathan Ake and Harry Wilson.

James Ward-Prowse's penalty reduced the deficit after half-time, but Bourne-

mouth survived a late barrage of pressure before Callum Wilson sealed their third league win this season. It was Bournemouth's first ever win at Southampton at the 16th attempt.

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS

Burnley 2 (Wood 10, 14) Norwich 0; Everton 0 Sheffield United 2 (Mina 40-og, Mousset 79); Leicester 2 (Pereira 69, Maddison 85) Tottenham 1 (Kane 29); Manchester City 8 (D.Silva 1, Agüero 7-pen, Mahrez 12, B.Silva 15, 48, 60, Otamendi 18, De Bruyne 85) Watford 0; Newcastle 0 Brighton 0

Playing today: Arsenal v Aston Villa (1530 GMT), Chelsea v Liverpool (1530 GMT), Crystal Palace v Wolves (1300 GMT), West Ham v Man Utd (1300 GMT)

Played Friday: Southampton 1 (Ward-Prowse 53-pen) Bournemouth 3 (Ake 10, H. Wilson 35, C. Wilson 90+5)

SPOTLIGHT

Klopp braces for test from 'exciting' Chelsea young guns

AFP
London

Jürgen Klopp warned Liverpool yesterday to brace for a fierce fight with the Chelsea youngsters that remind him of the thrilling Borussia Dortmund sides that took Germany and Europe by storm. Klopp, whose Premier League leaders take on Chelsea at Stamford Bridge on Sunday, built a dynamic team in his seven years at Dortmund fuelled by gifted prodigies including Mario Goetze, Nuri Sahin, Shinji Kagawa and Robert Lewandowski.

He sees more than a few similarities between Dortmund teams that won the Bundesliga in consecutive seasons and reached the Champions final in 2013, and the way Chelsea boss Frank Lampard has put his faith in the Blues's kids.

"It's a really exciting team, it reminds me a little bit of my team at Dortmund years back when they were really young, even younger than this Chelsea team," Klopp said. "People always talked about how young they are but they only played because they were that good, they didn't play because they were that young. They brought in Christian Pulisic in the summer and all the players around him have the same value — Tammy Abraham, Mason Mount, (Callum) Hudson-Odoi. A good team, all my respect. They are a proper contender for pretty much everything."

Academy graduates Abraham, Mount and Fikayo Tomori have all enjoyed strong starts to Lampard's first season in charge, with Chelsea's transfer ban forcing their new manager to give the youngsters an opportunity that was hard to come by in previous years of big spending by the Blues.

Abraham already has seven goals this season, while Mount is hopeful of featuring this weekend after recovering from an ankle injury suffered in Tuesday's Champions League defeat

against Valencia. Liverpool head to Chelsea having won all of their opening five league matches but with only one away win against top six opposition in their previous 12 attempts. Despite his praise for Chelsea's young tyros, Klopp must fancy his chances of ending that frustrating streak against a team still looking for their first home win under Lampard.

Liverpool had their own mid-week blip in the Champions League, with a 2-0 loss at Napoli bringing the holders back down to earth after their superb start to the domestic season. But Klopp's team sit five points clear of champions Manchester City thanks to their perfect start.

The Reds have already beaten Chelsea on penalties to win the European Super Cup after a 2-2 draw in Istanbul in August. "There are different ways to win away games, we have to find a way to find one," Klopp said. "We go there to get a result, you can't go to Chelsea and have a guarantee that you are going to win the game, they are just too strong for that. I think in 2016, we won against all of the top six and had all of the problems. Now we are much more successful winning all the other games."

While Liverpool have their sets sight on a first English title since 1990, Lampard knows Chelsea are likely to have to settle for a top four challenge following the transfer ban and close-season departure of Eden Hazard to Real Madrid.

Continuing the development of Abraham, 21, Mount, 20, and company is essential to Chelsea's progress and Lampard is eager for Mount to face Liverpool to further his education. "He has got a chance. We saw the image of the tackle which made it look really bad. Hopefully it is not so bad," Lampard said.

"We are trying, the good thing about Mason is his attitude is so good that he will give everything to play for this club. We will have every opportunity to try to get him there."



Liverpool's German manager Jurgen Klopp. (AFP)

LA LIGA

Zidane would quit Real Madrid without backing

AFP
Madrid

Zinedine Zidane believes he has the backing of Real Madrid but admits he would leave if he ever felt he had lost the club's support. Zidane has come under scrutiny after enduring his worst ever defeat as Madrid coach on Wednesday, a 3-0 loss to Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League.

The result also followed an underwhelming start in La Liga, which has seen Madrid claim two wins and two draws from games against Celta Vigo, Real Valladolid, Villarreal and Levante. After returning from Paris, Zidane gave his players the day off on Thursday, which surprised those high up at the club, according to reports in the Spanish press.

Asked if he felt like his methods were being questioned, Zidane said in a press conference on Friday: "No, not at all, the opposite. I think the club helps us all to be strong and supports all the people that work here. If it's ever not like that it would probably be best to leave."

On his decision to give the players a day off, Zidane added: "It's not a question of whether they deserve it or not. We have to give them time off. They need time with



Real Madrid's coach Zinedine Zidane (centre) and players attend a training session in Madrid yesterday. (AFP)

their families, they have to be able to rest. We have seven games in 21 days. They need time away and I understand that."

Madrid face La Liga's early frontrunners Sevilla today, when Zidane will be

hoping for a response after his side's miserable performance in midweek. Since Zidane returned as coach in March, Madrid have won seven, drawn four and lost five of their matches in all competitions.

Asked if he regrets coming back, Zidane said: "No, that's easy to answer. It would be easy to say yes in what is a difficult time but it wouldn't be true. I'm happy to be back and to start again. It's a difficult time at the moment but all I'm going to do is work harder and try to put things right. We all have to try to be together, united. When I hear all these questions, it makes everything seem gloomy but when you win everything changes. Things look ugly at the moment but you have to keep working."

Jose Mourinho is the favourite to succeed Zidane and the Portuguese has hardly kept a low-profile in recent weeks. Earlier this month, Mourinho attended a press event in Madrid, where he said his time at the Santiago Bernabeu had been his "best experience" as a coach.

"I know how it works," Zidane said. "It's not about whether it bothers me or doesn't bother me. If you lose, things have to change. Things are difficult now but that's the reality."

Zidane is boosted by the return of midfielder Fede Valverde for today's game at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan stadium but Luka Modric and Isco are out with thigh and hamstring injuries respectively, while Marcelo has a back problem. Marco Asensio is a long-term absentee with a knee injury.

Injury-hit PSG without Icardi, Sarabia for Lyon trip

Paris: Paris Saint-Germain's injury problems worsened yesterday as forwards Mauro Icardi and Pablo Sarabia were ruled out of today's Ligue 1 game at Lyon. Star striker Kylian Mbappe has also failed to recover from a thigh injury suffered in August, leaving PSG coach Thomas Tuchel without five attacking players, with Edinson Cavani and Julian Draxler also still sidelined.

"It's still too risky (to play Mbappe)," said Tuchel. "He's very close (to playing again), but it (his recovery) is not over." Winger Sarabia, a close-season signing from Sevilla, picked up a knock in Wednesday's 3-0 Champions League victory over Real Madrid, while Icardi, on loan from Inter Milan, is still yet to reach peak fitness.

The French champions will likely start with a front three of Neymar, Angel Di Maria and Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting at the Groupama Stadium. Lyon were widely tipped to be PSG's closest challengers for the league title this term, but Sylvainho's men sit eighth in the early table,

four points behind the leaders.

"It was tough last year (2-1 Lyon win) and it will be hard again this year, I'm expecting a Lyon in top form," said German Tuchel. "We have to do the same things as against Real, but it's not easy. It's the challenge of playing with the same spirit, the same intensity."

Yesterday, Marseille were held 1-1 by Montpellier in a match that saw two Andy Delort goals disallowed for offside for the visitors and three red cards in added time at the end of the game. Andre Villas-Boas' Marseille could have knocked off PSG of top spot with a victory.

On Friday, Nantes too missed the chance to go top after Ludovic Ajorque's last-minute penalty saw Strasbourg come from behind to win their first match of the season 2-1. Ajorque struck from the spot after Jean-Ricner Bellegarde was brought down in the area, capping a powerful second-half display that also featured a smart Dimitri Lienard leveller in the 66th minute and moved Strasbourg out of the relegation zone.