

**To advertise here**  
 Call: 44466621  
 44411300



**FOOTBALL | Page 3**  
**Atletico bid to erase pain of finals past in Marseille clash**



**CYCLING | Page 7**  
**Mohoric sprints to stage 10 win as Yates extends lead**

**The best newspaper is a nation's best asset**  
 to advertise here call: 444 11 300

Wednesday, May 16, 2018  
 Sha'baan 30, 1439 AH

# GULF TIMES SPORT



**CRICKET**

**Imam-ul-Haq sees Pakistan to win over debutants Ireland**

Page 6

**Emir Cup Final**  
 Al-Rayyan vs Al-Duhail  
 on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May  
 At Khalifa Stadium  
 Tickets are available in all malls

#EmirCup

SONY QNB M OGGOGO

QATAR ALKASS LOOC

**FOOTBALL / AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE**

# Unbeaten Al Duhail storm into quarter-finals

Duhail join fellow Qatari side Sadd and Iran's Persepolis and Esteghlal in last eight from West Asia



Al Duhail's Youssef El Arabi (centre) vies for the ball with Al Ain players during the second leg of their AFC Champions League Round of 16 tie. **PICTURES:** Noushad Thekkayil

**By Sports Reporter**  
 Doha

**Q**NB Stars League champions Al Duhail sealed an emphatic 4-1 win over Al Ain in the second leg of their 2018 AFC Champions League Round of 16 showdown yesterday, progressing to the quarter-finals 8-3 on aggregate.

Duhail remain the only team with a 100 percent win record this year in the continental championship, having won eight matches out of eight.

At the Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium, the hosts wasted no time in taking full control and were rewarded with a goal inside 11 minutes when Nam Tae-hee advanced down the left and sent a low ball across the goalmouth that was inadvertently converted by defender Mohamed Ahmad past his own goalkeeper.

Al Duhail doubled their tally at the half-hour mark through Youssef El Arabi who stabbed in Ismail Mohamed's powerful cross from the right flank.

Very little changed after the break as the Qataris continued to attack in numbers and soon found the net for a third time. El Arabi sent defender Sultan al-



Al Duhail coach Djamel Belmadi shouts instructions to his players yesterday.

Break through on goal and the latter attempted to lob goalkeeper Khalid Eisa who was able to get his fingertips on the ball before it fell for Mohammad who tapped into the empty net in the 54th minute.

Coach Djamel Belmadi's men heaped more misery on their visitors as El Arabi caught up with Baghdad Bounedjah at the top of the competition's scorers chart, converting his ninth goal of the campaign from the penalty spot following a hand

ball from defender Mohamad Salem four minutes from time.

Omar Abdulrahman netted a consolation goal for Al Ain in the dying seconds of the game from a penalty kick after he was fouled inside the box by defender Abdullah al-Ahrak.

Al Ain is still the only UAE side to win the Champions League. They lifted the title in 2003, and last failed to reach the quarter-finals in 2015.

Al Duhail join fellow Qatari side Al Sadd and Iran's Persepolis and Esteghlal in the quarter-finals from West Asia. In Tehran, Mame Thiam was the hero as his hat-trick gave Esteghlal a 3-1 win over Zobahan in the Round of 16 second leg tie yesterday, with Esteghlal advancing to the quarter-finals 3-2 on aggregate.

In the East Asia, Tianjin Quanjian eliminated fellow Chinese side Guangzhou Evergrande from the AFC Champions League yesterday, progressing to the quarter-finals on away goals after a breathless 2-2 draw in their Round of 16 second leg tie at Tianhe Stadium in Guangzhou.

Meanwhile, Buriram United's brave run in the AFC Champions League came to an end yesterday as a 2-0 loss at Jeonbuk saw them bow out of the 4-3 on aggregate.

**SPOTLIGHT**

## We deserved to qualify for quarters: Sadd's Bounedjah

**By Sports Reporter**  
 Doha

**B**aghdad Bounedjah was relieved that missed chances did not come back to haunt Al Sadd after the AFC Champions League Round of 16 win over Al Ahli on Monday.

Bounedjah, the leading scorer in the tournament, was again the man of the hour for Al Sadd in their Round of 16 second leg against Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli. The 26-year-old netted his eighth and ninth goals of the 2018 AFC Champions League to ensure a 2-2 draw on the night and a 4-3 aggregate win for Al Sadd.

The victory in Jeddah means the Qataris return to the quarter-finals for the first time since 2014, another milestone in what has been a hugely successful continental campaign thus far for Bounedjah.

"I am obviously delighted we reached the quarter-finals and that my two goals could help the team. To be honest, I believe we deserved to qualify for the last eight. I'd like to thank all my teammates for their efforts," said Bounedjah.

"After we ended the QSL season without any silverware, I am happy that, instead, this win can be our gift back to all the Al Sadd fans," the Algerian added.

However, Bounedjah did admit that there was a degree of relief mixed with the joy of the last eight-place. A dominant performance from Al Sadd did not disguise the fact that, with the scoreline concerned, their victory was only by a slim margin.

"We had numerous chances, especially in the second half, and we missed some good op-

portunities," added Bounedjah, who himself saw a penalty kick blocked by Ahli goalkeeper Mohammed al-Owais, before he was able to convert the rebound.

"At the end of the day, though, we were able to score the two goals that mattered and we qualified for the quarter-finals. That's all that matters. We consider this qualification a gift for the Al Sadd fans after ending the season without a title," the striker added.

Meanwhile, Al Sadd head coach Jesualdo Ferreira praised the efforts of his players. Ferreira said: "We played a great game. I was hoping for the win but I will take this draw, which has taken us to the quarter-finals of the championship."

Asked if Al Sadd were lucky to go through, considering Al Ahli missed key players, Ferreira said: "This kind of talk is unacceptable because we are missing players too. We have had injured players too; we have missed key players just like Al Ahli and this is how football is. Maybe, even if Al Ahli had played with a full-strength team, they may have not been able to win. End of the day, we were better and we deserve to go through."

The Portuguese added: "We are very happy with the team's achievement. I want to thank all the players for the efforts they put in. Congratulations to all of them. We hope fortune will favour us and we can continue on our road of success in Asia."

Al Sadd will now await the draw for the quarter-final round next week to know their next opponents. The opening leg of the quarter-finals will be played on August 27 and 28 with the concluding ties scheduled for September 17 and 18.



Al Sadd players celebrate their win over Al Ahli during the first leg of their Round of 16 clash in Doha earlier this month.

## SPOTLIGHT

# Injured Neuer in German World Cup squad as frictions stir

Captain Neuer named amongst four goalkeepers, one of whom will be cut for the final 23-man squad which must be finalised by June 4

AFP  
Dortmund, Germany

Injured Manuel Neuer was named in Germany's extended 27-man World Cup squad for Russia 2018, despite not playing since September, as political frictions threw a shadow over yesterday's announcement.

Both midfielders Mesut Ozil and Ilkay Gundogan are included despite triggering friction between Berlin and Ankara after the Premier League stars posed for pictures with Turkey President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in London.

"From the DFB's perspective, it has been made clear that it was not a good decision, but I didn't think of leaving them out for a second," said Germany head coach Joachim Loew. "I have a bit of understanding that two hearts beat in the chests of players with an immigration background. They have expressed regret and done a lot for integration in Germany."

There was more political activity as hosts Russia granted a World Cup visa to German journalist Hajo Seppelt, who had been banned from the finals after he broke the story on the Russian state-sponsored doping scandal.

However, Loew's top concern is whether his captain and goalkeeper Neuer will be fit for the World Cup finals, which kick-off on June 14. The 32-year-old Bayern Munich star has not played for eight months with a frac-

tured foot. He has been named amongst four goalkeepers, one of whom will be cut for the final 23-man squad which must be named by June 4. Neuer must now prove his fitness at a fortnight-long training camp in northern Italy, which started yesterday.

"Manuel is getting back into full training this week at Bayern Munich, that assures us that he can tolerate the full load in the training camp," explained Loew.

"Then we want to get a full idea, talk to him frankly and honestly, asking 'is it possible to play at the World Cup?' We have to decide whether Neuer is able to put in his top performances. 'I don't think it is possible to go into a World Cup without playing practice.'"

There is no place in Loew's squad for Mario Goetze, who scored the winning goal in the 2014 World Cup finals, after an erratic season at Borussia Dortmund. "It's definitely not been his season. He has huge qualities, but isn't in form," explained Loew. "Personally, I feel sorry for him and it was a hard decision."

However, Loew pulled a surprise by handing a first call-up to Freiburg striker Nils Petersen, 29, the top-scoring German in the Bundesliga this season with 15 goals. Yet there is no place for striker Sandro Wagner, Robert Lewandowski's back-up at Bayern Munich, who helped Germany win the Confederations Cup in Russia last year.

Bayern Munich defender Jerome Boateng has been called up even though



The 32-year-old Bayern Munich star Manuel Neuer has not played for eight months with a fractured foot. (AFP)

he is currently sidelined by a groin injury. Dortmund winger Marco Reus has a spot in the extended squad after missing out on the victorious 2014 World Cup squad after tearing ankle ligaments in a warm-up game. Germany open their Russia 2018 campaign against Mexico in Moscow on June 17, the defending champions also facing South

Korea and Sweden in Group F.

## GERMANY SQUAD

**Goalkeepers:** Bernd Leno (Bayer Leverkusen), Manuel Neuer (Bayern Munich), Marc-Andre ter Stegen (Barcelona/ESP), Kevin Trapp (Paris Saint-Germain/FRA)  
**Defenders:** Jerome Boateng (Bayern Munich), Matthias Ginter (Borussia

Moenchengladbach), Jonas Hector (Cologne), Mats Hummels (Bayern Munich), Joshua Kimmich (Bayern Munich), Marvin Plattenhardt (Hertha Berlin), Antonio Rudiger (Chelsea/ENG) Niklas Sule (Bayern Munich), Jonathan Tah (Bayer Leverkusen)  
**Midfielders/Forwards:** Julian Brandt (Bayer Leverkusen), Julian Draxler (Paris Saint-Germain), Mario Gomez (VfB Stutt-

gart), Leon Goretzka (Schalke 04), Ilkay Gundogan (Manchester City/ENG), Sami Khedira (Juventus/ITA), Toni Kroos (Real Madrid/ESP), Thomas Mueller (Bayern Munich), Mesut Ozil (Arsenal/ENG), Nils Petersen (Freiburg), Marco Reus (Borussia Dortmund), Sebastian Rudy (Bayern Munich), Leroy Sane (Manchester City/ENG), Timo Werner (RB Leipzig)

## NO COENTRAO, RENATO IN PORTUGAL SQUAD

**Lisbon:** Fabio Coentrao and Renato Sanches were missing from Portugal's 35-strong pre-World Cup squad named yesterday by coach Fernando Santos. The squad, which will be cut to 23 before the June 14-July 15 tournament in Russia, included Real Madrid star Cristiano Ronaldo and other mainstays of the team that won Euro 2016, such as Pepe, William Carvalho, Joao Moutinho, Nani and Ricardo Quaresma.

Portugal will face Spain, Morocco and Iran in Group B.

### PORTUGAL SQUAD:

**Goalkeepers:** Anthony Lopes (Lyon/FRA), Beto Goztepe/TUR, Rui Patricio (Sporting)

**Defenders:** Antunes (Getafe/ESP), Bruno Alves (Rangers/SCO), Cedric Soares (Southampton/ENG), Joao Cancelo (Inter Milan/ITA), Jose Fonte (Dalian Yifang/CHN), Luis Neto (Fenerbahce/TUR), Mario Rui (Napoli/ITA), Nelson Semedo (Barcelona/ESP), Pepe (Besiktas/TUR), Raphael Guerreiro (Borussia Dortmund/GER), Ricardo Pereira (Porto), Rolando (Marseille/FRA), Ruben Dias (Benfica).

**Midfielders:** Adrian Silva (Leicester City/ENG), Andre Gomes (Barcelona/ESP), Bruno Fernandes (Sporting), Joao Mario (West Ham/ENG), Joao Moutinho (Monaco/FRA), Manuel Fernandes (Lokomotiv Moscow/RUS), Ruben Neves (Wolverhampton/ENG), Sergio Oliveira (Porto), William Carvalho (Sporting)

**Forwards:** Andre Silva (AC Milan/ITA), Bernardo Silva (Manchester City/ENG), Cristiano Ronaldo

(Real Madrid/ESP), Eder (Lokomotiv Moscow/RUS), Gelson Martins (Sporting), Goncalo Guedes (Valencia/ESP), Nani (Lazio/ITA), Paulinho (Braga), Ricardo Quaresma (Besiktas/TUR), Rony Lopes (Monaco/FRA)

### NIGERIA NAMES PROVISIONAL 30-MAN

Tianjin Teda midfielder John Obi Mikel was named as Nigeria captain when the country's provisional 30-man squad for the 2018 World Cup was released. Nigeria are the only one of Africa's five representatives from the last World Cup to return for the 2018 edition.

The team representing Africa's most populous nation will be looking to improve on their progression to the last 16 in Brazil but the side have been drawn in one of the toughest groups in what will be their fifth World Cup appearance.

Chelsea wingback Victor Moses was Nigeria's top scorer in the qualifying campaign with three goals, while Mikel, Alex Iwobi, Moses Simon and Kelechi Iheanacho weighed in with two goals apiece.

Nigeria have been drawn in Group D in Russia, alongside Argentina, Iceland and Croatia, who they open their tournament against in Kaliningrad on June 16.

**Nigeria Squad:**  
**Goalkeepers:** Ikechukwu Ezenwa (Enyimba FC), Francis Uzoho (Deportivo La Coruna, Spain), Daniel Akepi (Chippa United, South Africa), Dele Ajiboye (Plateau

United).  
**Defenders:** Abdullahi Shehu (Bursaspor FC, Turkey), Tyrone Ebuehi (Ado Den Haag, The Netherlands), Olaoluwa Aina (Hull City, England), Elderson Echiejile (Cercle Brugge KSV, Belgium), Brian Idowu (Amkar Perm, Russia), Chidozie Awaziem (Nantes FC, France), William Ekong (Bursaspor FC, Turkey), Leon Balogun (FSV Mainz 05, Germany), Kenneth Omeruo (Kasimpasa FC, Turkey), Stephen Eze (Lokomotiv Plovdiv, Bulgaria).

**Midfielders:** John Obi Mikel (Tianjin Teda, China), Ogenyi Onazi (Trabzonspor FC, Turkey), Wilfred Ndidi (Leicester City, England), Oghenekaro Etebo (UD Las Palmas, Spain), John Ogu (Hapoel Be'er Sheva, Israel), Uche Agbo (Standard Liege, Belgium), Joel Obi (Torino FC, Italy), Mikel Agu (Bursaspor FC, Turkey).

**Forwards:** Ahmed Musa (CSKA Moscow, Russia), Kelechi Iheanacho (Leicester City, England), Moses Simon (KAA Gent, Belgium), Victor Moses (Chelsea FC, England), Odion Ighalo (Changchun Yatai, China), Alex Iwobi (Arsenal FC, England), Nwankwo Simeon (Crotone FC, Italy), Junior Lokosa (Kano Pillars).

**PANAMA LOOK TO YOUTH AND EXPERIENCE**  
Panama coach Hernan Dario Gomez is expected to rely on a mix of youth and experience at the World Cup this summer after unveiling a pre-selection squad of 35 players on Monday.

In Group G Panama will meet Belgium, England and Tunisia.

### Panama's preliminary squad:

**Goalkeepers:** Jaime Penedo (Dynamo Bucharest/ROM), Jose Calderon (Chorrillo), Alex Rodriguez (San Francisco/USA)

**Defenders:** Azmahar Ariano (Patriots/COL), Felipe Baloy (Municipal/GUA), Harold Cummings (San Jose/USA), Eric Davis (DAC Dunajska Streda/SVK), Fidel Escobar (New York Red Bulls/USA), Adolfo Machado (Houston Dynamo/USA), Michael Amir Murillo (New York Red Bulls/USA), Luis Ovalle (Olimpia/HON), Francisco Palacios (San Francisco/USA), Richard Peralta (Alliance), Torres Roman (Seattle Sounders/USA)

**Midfielders:** Ricardo Avila (Ghent/BEL), Edgar Barcenas (Cafetaleros de Tapachula/MEX), Ricardo Buitrago (Municipal/GUA), Miguel Camargo (San Martin/PER), Adalberto Carrasquilla (Taurus), Armando Cooper (Universidad de Chile/CHI), Anibal Godoy (San Jose Earthquakes/USA), Gabriel Gomez (Atletico Bucaramanga/COL), Jose Gonzalez (Union Comercio/PER), Cristian Martinez (Columbus Crew/USA), Valentin Pimentel (Plaza Amador), Alberto Quintero (Universite/PER), Jose Luis Rodriguez (Ghent/BEL)

**Forwards:** Abdiel Arroyo (Liga Deportiva Alajuelense/CRC), Rolando Blackburn (Chorrillo), Ismael Diaz (Deportivo La Coruna/ESP), Jose Fajardo (Club Atletico Independiente), Roberto Nurse (Mineros de Zacatecas/MEX), Blas Perez (Municipal/GUA), Luis Tejada (Sport Boys/PER), Gabriel Torres (Huachipato/CHI).

## FOCUS

# Wilshere and Hart left out of England's World Cup squad



Goalkeeper Joe Hart (left) and midfielder Jack Wilshere are not part of Gareth Southgate's England squad for this summer's World Cup in Russia.

By Dominic Fifield and Daniel Taylor  
The Guardian

Jack Wilshere and Joe Hart have been omitted from England's squad for this summer's World Cup but there is a place in Gareth Southgate's selection for Fabian Delph. Wilshere has missed out after being called up for the friendlies against Italy and the Netherlands in March only to withdraw because of injury.

The Arsenal midfielder, who has not played for his country since Euro 2016, started only 12 Premier League games in the season just finished and a historically fragile body may have counted against him given the demands of a tournament.

In leaving out Hart, Southgate has chosen to ignore his most experienced player. The Manchester City goalkeeper, who has spent the season on loan at West Ham, was told on Monday in a phone-call from the England manager that he would not be travelling to a fifth major finals despite Southgate having

considered the 31-year-old his first choice for much of his tenure. Hart won his 75th and most recent cap against Brazil in November but Jordan Pickford and Jack Butland started the friendlies in March and have usurped him in the pecking order.

The suggestion had been Hart would still travel to the World Cup as an experienced third-choice – only Gary Cahill and Jermain Defoe of Southgate's recent selections have more than 50 caps, with neither expected to make the cut for Russia – and would have been willing to fulfil that role, but his tools at club level appear to have counted against him.

He has endured an indifferent spell on-loan at West Ham this season, losing his place towards the end of November to Adrian and starting only 19 league games in total. He regained his place after a 4-1 defeat at Swansea in March, but there were subsequent high-profile errors against Burnley and Stoke. His last appearance was a 4-1 defeat at Arsenal on 22 April.

Burnley's Nick Pope, who was called up for the games against the Netherlands and Italy but

remains uncapped, is the likeliest to replace Hart in the 23-man squad, which Southgate will reveal today. Delph's inclusion follows a season in which he has been successfully remodelled as a left-back at City by Pep Guardiola. The 28-year-old has been more naturally a central midfielder and brings versatility to Southgate's squad.

The Burnley defender James Tarkowski, who has one cap, is understood to be on the standby list. Southgate is expected to select Phil Jones, John Stones and Harry Maguire as centre-backs, with Kyle Walker and Eric Dier also capable of playing there.

**ENGLAND'S LIKELY SQUAD**  
**Goalkeepers:** Jordan Pickford, Jack Butland, Nice Pope.

**Defenders:** Kieran Trippier, Kyle Walker, John Stones, Phil Jones, Harry Maguire, Danny Rose, Ashley Young.

**Midfielders:** Eric Dier, Jordan Henderson, Fabian Delph, Jake Livermore, Adam Lallana, Ruben Loftus-Cheek, Dele Alli, Raheem Sterling, Jesse Lingard.

**Forwards:** Harry Kane, Jamie Vardy, Marcus Rashford, Danny Welbeck

## BOTTOMLINE

# Australia axe Maclaren, Cahill included

AFP  
Sydney

Australian football chiefs were forced to deny yesterday that veteran Tim Cahill was in the country's World Cup squad for commercial reasons after in-form Hibernian striker Jamie Maclaren was axed. The 38-year-old is the Socceroos' most prolific scorer with 50 goals, hitting the net at three previous World Cups. His record speaks for itself, but he has only been a bit player for Millwall since returning to south London in January. Despite this, he made the cut as coach Bert van Marwijk trimmed his squad to 26 players from 32 yesterday, with Maclaren's omission the most controversial, having scored a hat-trick at the weekend for

Hibs in their 5-5 draw with Rangers.

It leaves Cahill and Swiss-based Tomi Juric as the two recognised strikers in the squad, although the highly-rated and uncapped Daniel Arzani kept his place. The announcement came as Cahill was unveiled as the face of the Socceroos' key sponsor Caltex's new advertising campaign.

It will see five of the company's petrol stations in major cities rebadged Cahilltex throughout May and June, featuring large pictures of Australia's best-known player. Football Federation Australia chief David Gallop denied there was any commercial rationale behind Cahill inclusion.

**AUSTRALIA 26-MAN WORLD CUP SQUAD (TO BE CUT TO FINAL 23 BY JUNE 3):**

**Goalkeepers:** Brad Jones (Feyenoord/NED), Mathew Ryan (Brighton/ENG), Daniel Vukovic (Genk/BEL)

**Defenders:** Aziz Behich (Bursaspor/TUR), Milos Degenek (Yokohama Marinos/JPN), Matthew Jurman (Suwon Bluewings/KOR), Fran Karacic (NK Lokomotiva/CRO), James Meredith (Millwall/ENG), Josh Risdon (Western Sydney Wanderers/AUS), Trent Sainsbury (Grasshopper Club Zurich/SWI)

**Midfielders:** Joshua Brillante (Sydney FC/AUS), Jackson Irvine (Hull City/ENG), Mile Jedinak (Aston Villa/ENG), Robbie Kruse (VfL Bochum/GER), Massimo Luongo (Queens Park Rangers/ENG), Mark Milligan (Al Ahli/KSA), Aaron Mooy (Huddersfield Town/ENG), Tom Rogic (Celtic/SCO), James Troisi (Melbourne Victory/AUS)

**Forwards:** Daniel Arzani (Melbourne City/AUS), Tim Cahill (Millwall/ENG), Tomi Juric (FC Luzern/SWI), Mathew Leckie (Hertha BSC/GER), Andrew Nabbout (Urawa Red Diamonds/JPN), Dimitri Petratos (Newcastle Jets/AUS), Nikita Rukavitsya (Maccabi Haifa/ISR)

EUROPA LEAGUE

# Atletico bid to erase pain of finals past in Marseille showdown

Atletico are looking to win the Europa League for the third time in nine seasons

AFP  
Lyon

After painful defeats in recent continental finals, Diego Simeone's Atletico Madrid are determined to justify their status as favourites in today's Europa League showpiece against Marseille in Lyon. Atletico lost in extra time to Real Madrid in the Champions League final of 2014, having been seconds away from victory in 90 minutes, and then lost on penalties to their city rivals in the final of the same competition two years later.

An exit from this season's Champions League in the group stage came as a big surprise for a formidable side spearheaded by Antoine Griezmann in attack, but they have put that behind them to close on glory in Europe's less prestigious competition.

Atletico are looking to win the Europa League for the third time in nine seasons, after triumphing in 2010 and again in 2012, shortly after 'Cholo' Simeone was appointed coach. "We can't wait for the final to come around," full-back Juanfran said as Atletico target a first trophy since 2014, when they won La Liga. "With 'Cholo' lots of things have changed at Atletico. Everything we have experienced in these last few years we will remember forever. I hope we can get another little medal."

It would be a first, and possibly last major medal as an Atletico player for Griezmann, who was raised not far from Lyon but has spent his whole career in Spain. The 27-year-old forward joined Atletico from Real Sociedad on the back of their title success in 2014, but could soon be on his way to Barcelona. Griezmann and Diego Costa will lead Simeone's attack as Atletico return to Lyon, where they lost 3-0 to Dynamo Kiev in the final of the now defunct Cup Winners' Cup in 1986.

Atletico have had plenty of heartbreak in European finals

down the years, as have Marseille. The French club have previously appeared in four, losing three, the exception being their victory over AC Milan in the inaugural Champions League final in 1993.

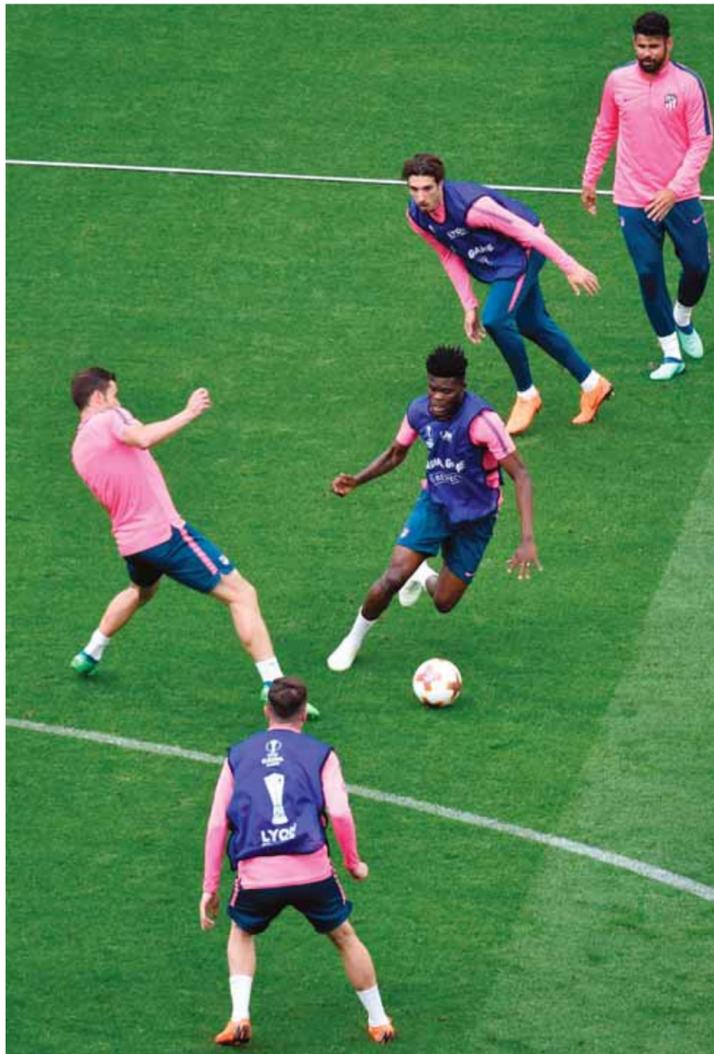
Rudi Garcia's team were not expected to make it this far, having started their European campaign in the qualifying rounds last July. But after rousing wins over RB Leipzig in the last eight and Salzburg in the semi-finals, OM and their passionate fans are now dreaming of glory on home soil. "Those who won the Champions League in 1993 are still heroes because nobody else has done it since," Dimitri Payet said. "We know how tough it is. Of course, that's an added source of motivation, and if we do win the final, our names will be written into the club's history books forever."

Marseille are also battling for a top-three finish in the French league, and the fear is that fatigue will be a factor as they try to break down Atletico's brilliant defence. "They are a big club, a super team with great players and a great coach. They are used to playing in big European matches. They are clear favourites but we will do everything to create a surprise," winger Florian Thauvin said.

Payet is "optimistic" he will shake off a minor muscle problem to feature in today's game, where Marseille will hope to have a big support behind them. Only around 11,500 of their fans will officially be in attendance, however, but several thousand more should make the three-hour trip to Lyon.

Authorities are preparing for the threat of trouble, with a big rivalry developing in recent years between Marseille and Lyon. Since reaching the final, Marseille fans have taunted Lyon and their outspoken president Jean-Michel Aulas with chants of: "We're going to smash up your house!"

There will be 1,250 police officers deployed in the city and around the Groupama Stadium, where today's match will start at 8:45pm (1845 GMT).



Atletico Madrid's Thomas (centre) trains with his teammates during a training session at the Parc OL stadium in Decines-Charpieu, France, yesterday. (AFP)

SPOTLIGHT

## New Italy coach Mancini vows to restore pride

AFP  
Florence, Italy

New Italy coach Roberto Mancini yesterday said he wanted to restore pride in the national side six months after their shock failure to qualify for the World Cup. "Not going to the World Cup is difficult for those who, like us, have always been cheering for the national team," Mancini told a press conference at the national training centre at Coverciano, near Florence.

"I feel the need to do something for the national team and think it's the right time for me. I want to build something for the years to come and bring Italy back to the top."

Italy have been without a permanent coach since Gian Piero Ventura was sacked after the four-time world champions failed to qualify for the World Cup for the first time since 1958. Former Manchester City and Inter Milan coach Mancini signed a two-year deal on Monday after severing his lucrative contract with Russians Zenit Saint Petersburg.

The contract, reportedly worth two million euros (\$2.3mn) a year, will see Mancini lead Italy's bid to qualify for Euro 2020. If successful, it will be automatically extended until June 2022, ahead of the World Cup in Qatar.

The Italian federation had been looking for a prestigious coach to rebuild an Azzurri side decimated after their play-off defeat to Sweden in the San Siro last November. Mancini will give up a reported 13mn euros in wages over the two remaining years on his Zenit contract to do national service.

"Mancini gave up significant financial opportunities to do so. This is testimony to his complete determination and desire to take on this job," said Italian FA commissioner Roberto Fabbricini.

His first match in charge will be a friendly on May 28 against Saudi Arabia in Switzerland.

Mancini said there would be "room for everyone" in his squad and that he planned to recall in-form Nice striker Mario Balotelli, whom he coached at Inter and Manchester City. Balotelli has not played for his country since the 2014 World Cup.

"Even in difficult times, Italy can boast of having players of great quality. I will certainly also speak with Balotelli," said Mancini. "He's a player that we want to see at the level he had during the Euro 2012 when Italy reached the final!"

He also said he would talk to recently retired Italy great Andrea Pirlo about joining his coaching setup. In Mancini, Italy have a coach with a solid track record as a title-winner, with 13 trophies in club football. He led Manchester City to their first English league title in 44 years in 2012, and won three Serie A crowns with Inter.

He also won the Italian Cup with Inter, Fiorentina and Lazio. Since leaving England in 2013, Mancini coached Galatasaray, whom he led to a Turkish Cup success, and returned to Inter before joining Zenit last June.

But this will be his first international coaching job. "I don't know if this will be my most difficult challenge, if you coach a club and you don't win everyone is angry with you, here there are 50mn people. That's beautiful too, though, because if you win something important there's huge satisfaction. It's not an easy challenge, but nothing is easy!"

Mancini, a former Lazio and Sampdoria forward, never became a regular during a love-hate relationship with Italy over a 10-year international career that gleaned just four goals in 36 caps. He reached the semi-finals of Euro 1988, and was in the squad that finished third in the 1990 World Cup on home soil.



Italy's newly-appointed head coach Roberto Mancini holds team's jersey during a press conference in Florence yesterday. (AFP)

## No Ibrahimovic, no surprise as Sweden name World Cup squad

Stockholm: Sweden coach Janne Andersson named a 23-man World Cup squad yesterday that dashed the faint hopes of fans expecting to see Zlatan Ibrahimovic feature at Russia 2018. Sweden beat Italy in the World Cup play-offs last November, sparking speculation that former Juventus, AC Milan, Barcelona and Manchester United striker Ibrahimovic would come out of international retirement.

Two weeks ago the 6ft 4ins (1.95m) striker, who quit the national squad in 2016 and is now playing for Los Angeles Galaxy in Major Soccer League, said he would not change his mind on the matter.

**SWEDEN SQUAD: Goalkeepers:** Robin Olsen (FC Copenhagen/DEN), Kristoffer Nordfeldt (Swansea/ENG), Karl-Johan Johnsson (Guingamp/FRA).

**Defenders:** Andreas Granqvist (Krasnodar/

RUS), Victor Nilsson Lindelof, (Manchester United/ENG), Mikael Lustig (Celtic/SCO), Ludwig Augustinsson (Werder Bremen/GER), Pontus Jansson (Leeds/ENG), Emil Krafth (Bologna/ITA), Filip Helander (Bologna/ITA), Martin Olsson (Swansea/ENG).

**Midfielders:** Sebastian Larsson (Hull/ENG), Gustav Svensson (Seattle Sounders FC/USA), Albin Ekdal (Hamburg/GER), Emil Forsberg (RB Leipzig/GER), Viktor Claesson (Krasnodar/RUS), Jimmy Durmaz (Toulouse/FRA), Marcus Rohden (Crotone/ITA), Oscar Hiljemark (Genoa/ITA)

**Forwards:** Marcus Berg (Al Ain/UAE), John Guidetti (Alaves/ESP), Isaac Kiese-Thelin (Waslan Beeveren/BEL), Ola Toivonen (Toulouse/FRA)

**RONALDO AND CARVAJAL BACK IN REAL TRAINING**

Ten days ahead of the Champions League final, Real Madrid received a

timely boost yesterday as Cristiano Ronaldo took part in training after a lay off for a twisted ankle. Carvajal had a thigh strain while Ronaldo was hurt in a clattering challenge in the 2-2 draw with Barcelona May 6. Madrid take on Liverpool on Saturday May 26 in Kiev chasing a third consecutive Champions League title.

**POST BARCA, INIESTA TO DECIDE BETWEEN CHINA OR JAPAN**

Barcelona captain Andres Iniesta says he will decide "next week" whether to continue his decorated career in either China or Japan. The 34-year-old Barca icon is bringing the curtain down on his two-decade stay with the Spanish champions, with his last game for the club he joined at the age of 12 coming on Sunday.

"There are two scenarios, China or Japan, and each has its advantages," he said. "There are some minor details to be

sorted out, we're weighing everything up and will pick which one we decide is the best option."

The Spanish midfielder added: "Next week, when everything is over, we'll decide. Then, there's the World Cup, I want to get this resolved so that I can focus. "One option is more advanced than the other..."

Last week both China's Chongqing Lifan and Japan's Vissel Kobe, owned by Barca sponsors Rakuten, denied making big money moves for the Spanish star. Iniesta's comments appear to rule out a move to Australia's A-League which had been suggested as his preferred destination by Spain's Sport website.

Iniesta announced in April his intention to leave Barcelona at the end of the season - Sunday's finale at the Camp Nou against Real Sociedad promises to be an emotionally-charged affair.

ROUND-UP

# Teen wonder Sessegnon inspires Fulham to playoff final

Teenage sensation Ryan Sessegnon scored once and created another as Fulham edged closer to a Premier League return on Monday night with a 2-0 win over Derby County in their Championship play-off. Thanks to a 2-1 aggregate victory, the 'Cottagers' will now play the winners of late last night's clash between Aston Villa and Middlesbrough with the former leading 1-0 after the first leg at Wembley on May 26.

English wingback Sessegnon, 17 - whose performances have attracted the attention of Manchester United, Tottenham Hotspur and French champions Paris Saint-Germain - brought the tie level two minutes into the second-half with his 16th goal of the season, before his corner was headed home by centre-back Denis Odoi in the 66th minute.

For Fulham - bidding to regain their Premier League status after a hiatus of four seasons - it is an historic moment as it was the first time they have won in eight play-off matches. "We showed a lot of bottle today," Sessegnon said.

"Credit to the lads, we pushed and pushed and should have scored in the first half. Thankfully I got the goal and it changed the game. The second put pressure on them. We believe in our style of play!"

**HUGHTON AGREES THREE-YEAR DEAL TO REMAIN BRIGHTON BOSS**

Brighton manager Chris Hughton has been rewarded for keeping the Seagulls in the Premier League with a new three-year contract. Hughton, 59, guided Brighton back to the top flight for the first time in 34 years last season, and a famous 1-0 win over Manches-

ter United earlier this month secured survival as they finished 15th.

"I'm delighted to have extended my time with the club, and I would like to thank the chairman, the board, my staff and everyone at the club, including our fans, for the support we've had in achieving our aims," Hughton said in a club statement on Tuesday.

"Our second season will be tougher, and we will need that spirit of togetherness to help us continue to progress - but once we've had a well-earned break and reflected on the season just gone, we will begin planning for 2018/19."

**ALLARDYCE SET FOR AXE AS EVERTON MANAGER: REPORTS**

Sam Allardyce's reign as Everton manager is set to end after less than six months in charge at Goodison Park,

according to widespread reports in England yesterday.

Sky Sports reported the 63-year-old will be informed at a meeting with majority shareholder Farhad Moshiri as early as today that his services are no longer required as Moshiri reacts to fans' growing discontent with the former England manager.

Allardyce's rudimentary style of play has proved deeply unpopular despite lifting the Toffees from 13th in the Premier League when he was appointed in November to finish eighth.

Despite signing an 18-month deal, Allardyce seemed resigned to his fate after Sunday's 3-1 defeat at former club West Ham, during which Everton supporters called for his sacking. "I can't quite say confident after all the rumours I'm reading in the paper," said Allardyce. "Generally there's no smoke

without fire. We'll wait and see when we meet up."

Allardyce was hired after a dismal start to the season under Ronald Koeman saw Everton fearing a relegation battle. Former Watford and Hull City manager Marco Silva is the favourite to take over and could complete the move to Goodison Park six months after the club failed to prise him away from Vicarage Road.

**BARCA REVEAL PLANS FOR THEME PARKS IN US AND ASIA**

Former Barcelona coach Luis Enrique once likened the club to Disneyland and yesterday the La Liga champions announced plans to open their own amusement parks in Asia and the United States in a bid to further boost their global brand.

The five parks, which will be

between 3,000 and 10,000 square metres, will be built by Spanish leisure park group Parques Reunidos in shopping malls and "iconic establishments" in major cities, with the first parks being opened in 2020.

The move is the latest step in Barca's global expansion, which has seen the club already open offices in Hong Kong and New York and discuss plans to launch offices in China and South America. The club also has an extensive set of football schools in the United States and Canada and will hold their pre-season tour in the US for a second year running, playing friendlies against Tottenham Hotspur, AS Roma and AC Milan.

Last year, Barca's all-time top scorer and talisman Lionel Messi announced plans to open a theme park in Nanjing, China in 2020.

NBA

# Warriors trounce Rockets in playoff series opener

'We're not going to relax. We're still not where we want to be. We still have a long way to go'

AFP  
Washington

Season wins leader Houston battled an entire campaign to seize a home-court edge throughout the NBA playoffs, but defending champion Golden State stole it away with a 119-106 victory on Monday.

Kevin Durant scored 37 points and Klay Thompson added 28 for the Warriors to capture the best-of-seven Western Conference final opener in a rare series start on the road for a team seeking its third NBA crown in four seasons.

"We're just trying to win every game we play," Warriors forward Draymond Green said. "It ends up being 'stealing home court' but we don't look at it that way. We won one game on the road. Let's try to win two."

Stephen Curry added 18 points, six rebounds and eight assists while Green contributed nine rebounds and nine assists for the Warriors.

"It's a great start. We played well," said Thompson, who scored 11 points in the fourth quarter. "We're not going to relax. We're still not where we want to be. We still have a long way to go."

NBA scoring champion James Harden netted 41 points to lead the Rockets, who host game two on Wednesday.

"We've got to do a better job of taking better shots, not turning the ball over and getting back on D," Harden said. "We've got to make them rotate and take tougher shots. They do a really good job if you take bad shots or turn the ball over. That's what they thrive on. Those mistakes can't happen."

Durant scored 17 first-half points and sparked Golden State after the Rockets played aggressively at the start, using two big runs to jump ahead only to have the Warriors overtake them by the middle of the second quarter.

"You know they are going to come out with a lot of energy," Durant said.

"We just tried to take their best punch and keep fighting. To withstand that run says a lot about our team," Green said. "The further you get along in the playoffs, the more intensity you need to bring."

Rockets coach Mike D'Antoni knows that all too well.

"If we're going to knock these



Golden State Warriors forward Kevin Durant (centre) shoots over Houston Rockets guard James Harden and forward PJ Tucker (right) during the fourth quarter in game one of the Western Conference finals of the 2018 NBA playoffs at Toyota Centre. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

guys off we have to get a better mental focus," D'Antoni said. "We ran out of gas a little bit in different spots and they didn't."

"It's just a bunch of stuff we can clean up and we will. We'll come out and attack them Wednesday."

**'They made us pay'**

Chris Paul had 23 points and 11 rebounds for the Rockets, who fell behind in the third period and couldn't catch up in the fourth.

"Every time we made a mis-

take they made us pay," Paul said. "Some of it was breakdowns, things we can clean up and do better. We have to communicate better."

Durant says the Warriors know Harden will always be a threat but Golden State must remain poised against a Rockets lineup that can unleash a barrage of 3-pointers if their focus lapses.

"We know James is always going to score over us. We just had to keep solid and keep playing hard," Durant said.

"This Houston team never stops. They are always in the game with 3-point shots. We play a calm steady game, look for a good shot and play good D every time down."

**Staying mentally sharp**

Thompson had a 3-pointer and two free throws in a 10-2 Warriors run that Durant capped with a 3-pointer for a 100-87 lead with 7:58 remaining in the fourth quarter. Houston never threatened again.

"We can do a little better job

against them mentally," D'Antoni said. "They are champions for a reason. If we want to beat them we have to be mentally sharp."

"KD was on. We can live with that. But we can't have that and mental mistakes."

The Rockets jumped ahead 9-2 and 21-12 but the Warriors battled back, taking their first lead of the game at 35-33 on David West's layup 2:57 into the second quarter.

"They took the challenge and played awfully well," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said.

NHL

# Fleury finds his ruthless streak to slow down Jets

Reuters  
Winnipeg, Canada

Marc-Andre Fleury quickly gained revenge on the Winnipeg fans who had mercilessly taunted the Vegas Golden Knights netminder on Saturday when the Jets pumped three goals past him in the opening minutes of the NHL Western Conference finals.

Fleury took the barbs and a 4-2 loss with good humour but replaced the smiles with his game face on Monday as he delivered a stellar 30-save performance to backstop the Golden Knights to a 3-1 victory to send series back to Las Vegas level at 1-1.

"I expected that they (would) come out flying again," said Fleury, refusing to gloat. "Everybody steps up at some point and everybody is contributing to the success of our team. That's why we've been consistent in the season and the playoffs."

A triple Stanley Cup winner with the Pittsburgh Penguins, it was always going to take more than chants of "Fleurry, Fleurry" no matter how loud to rattle the ice cool French-Canadian.

Fleury's sparkling play during the first two rounds of the post-season that featured series wins over the Los Angeles Kings and San Jose Sharks put him firmly in the Conn Smythe trophy discussion as the playoffs most valuable player.

Monday's effort in Game Two of the best-of-seven series will have only enhanced his claims.

His .951 save percentage coming into the West Finals was the best in NHL history for a goalie with at least 10 playoff starts but he has also surrendered three or more goals in five of his last six contests.

Despite the Game One wobble, Fleury remains key to Vegas' hopes of capping a remarkable debut campaign by becoming the first expansion team in a major North American professional league to claim a championship on their first attempt.

As they did in Game One, the Jets came out firing on all cylinders but Fleury withstood the barrage while Tomas Tatar and Jonathan Marchessault each counted to give the Golden Knights a 2-0 first period lead.

"They came out pretty hard and Fleury had to make three or four real good save the first seven or eight minutes," Vegas coach Gerard Gallant said. "We rebounded after that and got that 2-0 lead and it was a different game."

Fleury would not surrender a goal until midway through the final period when Kyle Connor, parked at the side of net, rifled a shot that somehow found its way between the netminder's pads, sparking a roar from the Winnipeg crowd.

The buzz, however, lasted just 88 seconds before Marchessault collected his second goal of the game with a nifty backhand over Jets goaltender Connor Hellebuyck.



Vegas Golden Knights' Marc-Andre Fleury (left) and Ryan Reaves celebrate their win over Winnipeg Jets in game two of the Western Conference Finals during the NHL Stanley Cup playoffs at Bell MTS Place in Winnipeg, Canada. (Getty Images/AFP)

MLB

# Manaea and Athletics down Red Sox again

Reuters  
Boston

Sean Manaea didn't have no-hit stuff this time around against the Boston Red Sox, but he pitched well enough to lead the Oakland Athletics to another victory on Monday night.

Manaea gave up four runs (three earned) while striking out four over six innings to help visiting Oakland snap a two-game skid with a 6-5 win against Boston in the opener of a three-game series.

Manaea (5-4) pitched the first no-hitter against the Red Sox in 25 years in his last start against them at home on April 21, striking out 10 batters in a 3-0 victory. Oakland won two of three games in the series.

Matt Joyce (2-for-4), Matt Olson (2-for-4) and Khris Davis (2-for-4) each slugged solo homers, Jonathan Lucroy drove in two runs and Dustin Fowler had an RBI.

The Athletics had dropped five of their previous six games.

Hanley Ramirez had a pair of

RBI's and both J.D. Martinez (2-for-4) and Rafael Devers added solo home runs for the Red Sox, who had their two-game winning streak snapped.

Boston starter Rick Porcello (5-1) allowed five runs on nine hits and no walks over six innings. He struck out five.

Joyce's solo homer of approximately 416 feet to right field in the third inning put Oakland ahead 1-0.

Boston answered with two runs in the bottom of the third. Andrew Benintendi's infield single tied the game, and Ramirez followed with an RBI single. Lucroy put the A's back in control with his two-run single in the fourth. Fowler proceeded to knock a standup RBI triple to make it 4-2.

Ramirez made it a one-run game with an RBI on his fielder's choice grounder in the fifth, but Olson clocked a solo blast an estimated 418 feet to right in the sixth to give Oakland a 5-3 advantage.

Devers clubbed an estimated 373-foot solo blast over the Green Monster in left to bring Boston within a run in the sev-

enth. Davis smacked his team-leading 12th homer in the eighth to make it 6-4.

Martinez's solo blast into the Red Sox's bullpen in the bottom of the inning again made it a one-run game.

Oakland closer Blake Treinen pitched a perfect ninth for his seventh save.

Before the game, Boston added pitcher Steven Wright to the major league roster and placed pitcher Hector Velazquez (lower back strain) on the 10-day disabled list.

Wright had been serving a 15-game suspension for violating MLB's domestic-abuse policy. Oakland right-hander Daniel Mengden (2-4, 4.06 ERA) opposes Boston lefty Eduardo Rodriguez (3-0, 4.58) on Tuesday.

**RESULTS**

Tigers	6	Indians	3
Mariners	1	Twins	0
Rays	2	Royals	1
A's	6	Red Sox	5
Braves	6	Cubs	5
Brewers	7	Diamondbacks	2
Angels	2	Astros	1
Rockies	6	Padres	4
Giants	10	Reds	7



Oakland Athletics starting pitcher Sean Manaea pitches against the Boston Red Sox during first inning of their MLB game at Fenway Park. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

SELECTION

# England recall Buttler for first Pakistan Test

'Jos is playing with great confidence and flair, and he will bring unique qualities to the Test team'

Buttler has not played a Test since being dropped after the tour of India 18 months ago, since which time he has almost exclusively played white-ball cricket.



AFP  
London

England recalled batsman Jos Buttler in a 12-man squad announced yesterday for the first Test against Pakistan at Lord's on May 24.

In the first England squad since former Test batsman Ed Smith took over as national selector, Somerset off-spinner Dom Bess was given a first call-up.

But, after England's tour series losses in Australia and New Zealand, top-order batsman James Vince was dropped after a run of low scores at Test level despite the Hampshire batsman making an unbeaten 201 against Somerset on Monday.

Buttler, widely regarded as one of the most talented English batsmen of his generation, last played Test cricket when he batted down the order.

The 27-year-old has had a frustrating 18-match career in Test cricket, with his last appearance in the format against India at Chennai in December 2016.

Having made an impact at international level as a wicket-keeper/batsman, Buttler has been selected for the

first of a two-Test series against Pakistan purely as a batsman.

Jonny Bairstow, who succeeded Buttler as England's Test keeper, has retained his place behind the stumps having become a mainstay of skipper Joe Root's side with both bat and gloves.

Buttler is currently playing for the Rajasthan Royals in the Twenty20 Indian Premier League, where his last three scores have been 95, 94 and 81.

**'Outstanding talent'**

But he has not played first-class cricket for Lancashire, his English county, since the end of last season.

"Jos Buttler is an outstanding talent, who is already a central part of England's white ball teams," said Smith in an England and Wales Cricket Board statement.

"The selection panel feels that this is the perfect moment to reintroduce Jos to Test cricket, where he has already enjoyed some success, including a stint playing as a specialist batsman at number seven.

"Jos is playing with great confidence and flair, and he will bring unique qualities to the Test team."

Bess, 20, has played just 16 first-class matches.

But he starred for MCC in the Cham-

pion County match against Essex in March where he took eight wickets in the match and scored a century in a victory over the county Champions in Barbados.

An injury to Somerset team-mate Jack Leach has paved the way for Bess's inclusion as the lone specialist spinner in a squad after England decided against recalling Moeen Ali.

"Dom Bess has made an excellent start to his first-class career," said Smith.

"With Jack Leach missing out due to injury, the selection panel wanted to invest opportunity in a young spin bowler.

"Dom's strong form, character and all-round abilities presented a compelling case for selection."

**England 12-man squad to play Pakistan in the first Test at Lord's, May 24-28:**

Joe Root (Yorkshire, capt), James Anderson (Lancashire), Jonny Bairstow (Yorkshire, wkt), Dom Bess (Somerset), Stuart Broad (Nottinghamshire), Jos Buttler (Lancashire), Alastair Cook (Essex), Dawid Malan (Middlesex), Ben Stokes (Durham), Mark Stoneman (Surrey), Chris Woakes (Warwickshire), Mark Wood (Durham)

**ECB targeting younger fans with new 100-ball competition**

The English and Wales Cricket Board's (ECB) proposal for a new 100-ball competition was created to attract younger people to the sport, according to the organisation's chairman Colin Graves.

Last month, the ECB unanimously backed a proposal to add an eight-team tournament to their domestic schedule from 2020. The shorter matches will see each side face 15 six-ball overs, culminating in a final 10 deliveries. Graves believes that ECB's recent experimentation with new formats is due to traditional cricket not enticing younger audiences.

"It's a challenge but every county chairman - and I mean every county chairman - has told me that they are behind the new tournament. They can see why we are doing it," Graves told the *Times*.

"What we do know is the kind of audience that we are not getting. We're after kids and the next generation, the families. We are not getting them to watch

our existing products so we know there is a gap in the marketplace and we know that, when we get that product right, it will attract a new audience..."

Despite the new array of formats that the ECB is testing, Graves emphasised that existing fans of traditional forms would not be taken for granted, pointing out that the governing body's investment in county and international cricket. The 70-year-old also said that he was disappointed by the reaction to the new proposal but understood that the adverse reception was due to the uncertainty surrounding the event.

"The reaction (to the new tournament) was disappointing, but to be expected because a lot of it is in its infancy," he added.

"It's only a concept, there's a lot of work to do with it and, when we do that work and put it out to the public and players, they will see it in a different light..."

**19 years on, Bangladesh bury hatchet with former coach Greenidge**

Bangladesh have finally buried the hatchet with West Indies batting great Gordon Greenidge - nearly two decades after unceremoniously sacking him as head coach in the middle of the 1999 World Cup.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board hosted a reception for Greenidge late Monday in Dhaka, reuniting the coach with his former players and the executives who dumped him.

Greenidge led Bangladesh to the ICC Trophy title in Malaysia in 1997, and also steered the cricket minnows to their first World Cup. He was awarded honorary citizenship of Bangladesh in recognition of his achievements.

But his relationship with cricket officials soured after he opposed Bangladesh's bid for Test status, a move he considered premature. Greenidge, who was sacked as Bangladesh prepared to play Pakistan in a World Cup fixture in England in 1999, had returned to Bangladesh just once since his sudden exit - until Monday's function.

"The parting was disappointing. I would have liked to spend more time with Bangladesh cricket, but it wasn't to be. I have no ill. But these things happen," Greenidge told reporters at the reception. Members of the squad he steered to victory in the ICC Trophy swapped stories with their old coach at the function.

Greenidge said he hoped the frostiness was resigned to the past. "I cherish all my memories here in Bangladesh. Now that we have met again, I sincerely hope that we can renew that relationship, and continue where we left off," he said. In a goodwill gesture, Bangladesh cricket officials donated 500,000 taka (\$6,100) to a school Greenidge founded in his native Barbados.

Greenidge played 108 Tests and 113 one day internationals and was known as one of the most destructive batsmen of his time.

**India's Manohar re-elected as ICC chairman**

India's Shashank Manohar has been re-elected chairman of the International Cricket Council for another two years, the sport's world governing body said yesterday. Manohar, who became the ICC's first independent chairman in 2016, was elected unopposed for a second term after a tenure marked by broad reforms.

He was the sole nominee for the position. As chairman he spearheaded efforts to restructure the ICC to curb the dominance of cricket's three wealthiest nations, Australia, India and England. The 60-year-old former head of the Indian board successfully revised the ICC's governance and pushed for the appointment of its first independent female director.

"Over the next two years we can look forward to launching a global strategy for the sport in partnership with our members so we can grow the game and ensure more of the world can enjoy cricket," Manohar said in an ICC statement.

"The sport is in good health but we are the guardians of the game and we must continue to work hard to maintain that." Manohar resigned from the post last year but was persuaded by the ICC board to retake the helm.

SPOTLIGHT

# Mark Waugh steps down as Australian selector

AFP  
Sydney

Australian cricket great Mark Waugh yesterday quit as a national selector to take up a television commentary role as broadcasters jockey for top talent after a new rights deal was agreed.

Waugh will not renew his contract when it expires on August 31 but will remain on the panel for the upcoming Australian tours of England and Zimbabwe.

"Working alongside my fellow selectors, the coaching staff and players over the past four years has been a privilege, and I'm proud of the achievements of the Australian teams across all formats in this time," he said.

"I firmly believe Australian cricket has a wealth of talented players in its ranks right now, and I look forward to watching the team continue to go from strength to strength in the years to come."

No replacement has been announced with his departure, leaving the panel consisting of Trevor Hohns, Greg Chappell and new coach Justin Langer.

Waugh, who played 128 Tests and 244 one-dayers for Australia, has been a selector since 2014, focusing mostly on Twenty20s but also providing input on the one-day international and Test teams.

He leaves to join pay-tv company Fox Sports, which along with the free-to-air *Seven Network* won a bidding war last month for television and digital cricket rights in Australia in a six-year deal worth almost Aus\$1.2 billion (US\$918 million).

It ended cricket's four-decade relationship with the rival *Nine Network* and also sidelined the CBS-backed *Ten Network*, which had previously screened Big Bash League games.

Since then the two broadcasters have been working to secure top commentary teams.

Adam Gilchrist has also signed with Fox along with Allan Border, Mike Hussey, and England's Michael Vaughan. Shane Warne, Australia's most sought-after commentator, is widely expected to follow suit.

Test legend Ricky Ponting will lead Seven's coverage.

Along with former coach Darren Lehmann - who sat beside him on a two-man selection panel - he bled a number of players in Australian colours during last year's T20 tri-series win over England and New Zealand.

However both are now gone, with CA yet to decide whether there will be another panel restructure, or if a new face will sit beside new coach Justin Langer during the preparations for the tournament.

"In recent times, Mark's in-depth knowledge of the T20 game and the Big Bash League has come to the fore," CA performance manager Pat Howard said.

"As lead selector in this format, he has identified talent in the Big Bash League and helped to create a strong Australian T20 squad, which has risen up to second on the ICC rankings and laid a platform for what we hope will be a successful World T20 campaign in 2020 on home soil.

"We're disappointed to lose Mark, but wish him all the best in his new role and we are pleased he will still have heavy involvement in the game."



## DUBLIN TEST

# Imam-ul-Haq sees Pakistan to win over debutants Ireland

'Batting is very difficult here so a great knock from Imam and Babar'

AFP  
Dublin

Pakistan debutant Imam-ul-Haq saw his side to victory as Ireland's first match in Test Cricket ended in a gallant last-day defeat by five wickets at Malahide yesterday.

Pakistan, set a seemingly modest 160 to win after earlier making Ireland follow-on, collapsed to 14 for three before lunch on the fifth day. But 22-year-old left-handed opener Imam, the nephew of Pakistan selection chief and former Test batsman Inzamam-ul-Haq, responded to the pressure with 74 not out - his maiden fifty at this level.

Together with Babar Azam, who made 59 after being dropped on nine, he kept Ireland at bay during a fourth-wicket stand of 126. Imam hit the winning runs as grey clouds threatening rain hung over Malahide.

Victory was a good way for Pakistan to prepare for the first of a two-Test series against England at Lord's starting on May 24.

"Batting is very difficult here so a great knock from Imam and Babar" said Pakistan captain Sarfraz Ahmed at the presentation ceremony. As for the England series the wicket-keeper added: "We need this kind of performance, so inshallah we are ready for that tour."

Ireland captain William Porterfield was proud of his side's second innings resilience, particularly after they were dismissed for 130 in their first innings.

"We had a hell of a lot of good things coming out of the game," he said. "I couldn't have asked any more of the bowlers, we'd have liked to have the opportunity to bat that first innings again, but we showed character, and brought that into our first Test."

Just four balls into their chase, Pakistan saw Azhar Ali edge Tim Murtagh to Paul Stirling at first slip.

Haris Sohail (seven) fell next, caught in the gully by Ed Joyce off towering fast bowler Boyd Rankin as Ireland's two former England internationals combined. And 13 for two became 14 for three in 4.3 overs when Middlesex pacer Murtagh produced a superb delivery to bowl Asad Shafiq between bat and pad



Pakistan players celebrate with the trophy after beating Ireland on the final day of Ireland's debut Test at Malahide cricket club in Dublin yesterday. (AFP)

## SCOREBOARD

<b>Pakistan 1st Innings 310-9 dec</b>	
<b>Ireland 1st Innings 130</b>	
<b>Ireland 2nd Innings (following-on, overnight: 319-7)</b>	
E. Joyce run out (Faheem Ashraf) .....	43
W. Porterfield c Sarfraz Ahmed b Mohamed Amir .....	32
A. Balbirnie lbw b Mohamed Abbas .....	0
N. O'Brien b Mohamed Amir .....	18
P. Stirling lbw b Mohamed Abbas .....	11
K. O'Brien c Haris Sohail b Mohamed Abbas .....	118
G. Wilson c Haris Sohail b Mohamed Amir .....	12
S. Thompson b Shadab Khan .....	53
T. Kane b Mohamed Abbas .....	14
B. Rankin b Mohamed Abbas .....	6
T. Murtagh not out .....	5
<b>Extras (b1, lb20, nb2, w4) .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Total (all out, 129.3 overs, 579 mins) .....</b>	<b>339</b>
<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-69 (Joyce), 2-69 (Balbirnie), 3-94 (N O'Brien), 4-95 (Porterfield), 5-127 (Stirling), 6-157 (Wilson), 7-271 (Thompson), 8-321 (K O'Brien), 9-332	

for one. At that point Ireland looked capable of becoming only the fourth team in the 141-year history of Test Cricket to win after following on. They needed to grasp every chance but Babar was dropped on nine in the slips by Andrew Balbirnie.

Imam, having cover driven a four off Rankin, completed a 61-ball fifty with seven boundaries. But with Pakistan 20 runs shy of victory, a mix-up saw Babar run out. Earlier, Ireland were dismissed for 339 in their second innings. Kevin O'Brien, who on

(Rankin), 10-339 (Kane)	
<b>Bowling:</b> Amir 29.2-9-63-3; Abbas 28.3-10-66-5 (Inb); Rahat 23-3-75-0 (2w); Faheem 18-3-51-0 (Inb, 1w); Shadab 30.4-7-63-1	
<b>Pakistan 2nd Innings (target: 160)</b>	
Azhar Ali c Stirling b Murtagh .....	2
Imam-ul-Haq not out .....	74
Haris Sohail c Joyce b Rankin .....	7
Asad Shafiq b Murtagh .....	1
Babar Azam run out (Balbirnie/Thompson) .....	59
Sarfraz Ahmed lbw b Thompson .....	8
Shadab Khan not out .....	4
<b>Extras (nb5) .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Total (5 wkts, 45 overs, 199 mins) .....</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-2 (Azhar), 2-13 (Haris), 3-14 (Shafiq), 4-140 (Babar), 5-152 (Sarfraz)	
<b>Bowling:</b> Murtagh 16-3-55-2; Rankin 12-1-57-1 (3nb); Thompson 11-4-31-1 (2nb); Kane 6-1-17-0;	
<b>Result: Pakistan won by five wickets</b>	
<b>Man-of-the-match: Kevin O'Brien (IRL)</b>	

A crestfallen O'Brien bowed his head in frustration and dropped his bat as he trudged off the field. But the 34-year-old had every reason to be proud of an innings that spanned five hours, 44 minutes and saw him face 217 balls with 12 fours.

His exit was the start of a three-wicket burst from Abbas, who wrapped up the innings on his way to figures of five for 66 in 28.3 overs "I think a slightly better morning for us and we could have pushed Pakistan even harder," said O'Brien.

"I struggled the most this morning trying to forget about yesterday, it was mentally draining. I just played the situation where we needed to stick in and dig around. I'm renowned for slogging the ball into the stands but I reined myself in a little bit!"

Ireland's performance in giving Pakistan a scare was put into context by the fact only one team had ever won their first Test match - and that was when Australia beat England by 45 runs in the inaugural Test at Melbourne back in 1877.

## PREVIEW

## Mumbai Indians face Kings XI Punjab in must-win game

FIANS  
Mumbai

Mumbai Indians will be desperate for a win against Kings XI Punjab to keep their play-off hopes alive when they square-off in a crucial Indian Premier League (IPL) tie at the Wankhede stadium yesterday.

Just when Mumbai's dream of making it to the final four was on the verge of getting shattered, the Rohit Sharma-led brigade came up with a spirited show to register a hat-trick of wins before faltering against Rajasthan Royals in their previous game.

Mumbai have to win both their remaining two matches to keep their chances alive for advancing to the play-offs.

With 10 points, the three-time champions are placed at the sixth spot in the IPL points table while their opponents are a spot ahead with 12 points in their kitty. Mumbai will once again rely on opener Suryakumar Yadav, who has been consistent with the bat, amassing 473 runs from 12 innings.

The other opener Evin Lewis also got back his touch in the last match, hitting a 42-ball 60. However, Mumbai's middle order failed miserably including skipper Rohit. Barring his match-winning knock against Royal Challengers Bangalore, Rohit has failed to live up to the expectations this season. The Pandya brothers - Hardik and Krunal - will also need to dish out something special if they are to stand any chance of making it to the final four. In the bowling department, Jasprit Bumrah, Hardik and left-arm pacer Mitchell McClenaghan will have to

bowl accurately to get rid of the likes of the in-form Lokesh Rahul and Chris Gayle. On the other hand, despite being a place ahead, Punjab lag behind Mumbai in net run-rate.

The Ravichandran Ashwin-led side, who started their IPL campaign on a rousing note, faltered in the business end of the league, losing five of their last six games. Punjab suffered their worst defeat of the season in their last outing when Royal Challengers Bangalore hammered them by 10 wickets, a game where both the batsmen and bowlers succumbed before Kohli's men.

Punjab's batting mostly relies on openers Rahul and Gayle as the duo have accumulated 558 and 350 runs respectively. The Punjab openers have been a major reason behind their success as the two have handed a perfect start to their side on several occasions in this year's edition. Karun Nair has been inconsistent with 247 runs so far, while veteran Yuvraj Singh and Mayank Agarwal are yet to make their presence felt in the middle-order.

Punjab will be relieved by the fact that Aaron Finch returned to form with a 34 & 26 during the loss to Kolkata Knight Riders and RCB, respectively.

In the bowling department, Australian pacer Andrew Tye (20 wickets) and Afghan teenage spinner Mujeeb-ur-Rahman (14 wickets) have been brilliant.

Pacer Ankit Rajpoot (eight wickets), off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin (six wickets) and medium-pacer Mohit Sharma (six wickets) need to raise the bar against Mumbai, after going wicketless against Bangalore.

### India aims for women's IPL in three years

India aims to launch a women's version of its hugely popular Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket tournament in the next three years, a senior official said yesterday. As part of the build-up, top international women players will take part in a Twenty20 game at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium next week. "We are planning to get a women's IPL in place in two to three years," Board of Control for Cricket in India administrator Vinod Rai told AFP. No firm details of the new league have yet been revealed, but pressure for a women's IPL has been building since India reached the final of the women's World Cup in England last year. England's Danni Wyatt, Australian all-rounder Elyse Perry and New Zealand captain Suzie Bates are some of the names confirmed for the May 22 exhibition game. Top Indians including national skipper Mithali Raj, Jhulan Goswami and Harmanpreet Kaur will compete in an Indian team under IPL rules in the exhibition. "The match to be played between a BCCI XI and IPL XI will take place ahead of the first (men's IPL) playoff at the Wankhede Stadium," Rai said. Also signed up are wicketkeeper-batter Alyssa Healy, Megan Schutt and Beth Mooney from Australia, and Kiwi batter Sophie Devine, who holds the record for the fastest half-century in women's T20Is. IPL chairman Rajeev Shukla said: "Even as the IPL continues to roll like a well-oiled machine, over the last couple of weeks efforts were made to put in place a similar structure for women cricketers. "We were in talks with several boards and I am pleased with the outcome."

## INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

## KKR edge closer to playoffs with win over Royals

FIANS  
Kolkata

Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) sharpened their chances of a playoff berth with a convincing six-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals (RR) in a crucial Indian Premier League (IPL) clash at the Eden Gardens yesterday.

Kuldeep Yadav (4/20) starred for the two-time champions as Royals were bowled out for 142 in 19 overs despite an early blitz from the visiting team openers. Chasing a modest target, KKR rode Chris Lynn's 45 (42b; 5x4, 1x6) and captain Dinesh Karthik's unbeaten 41 (31b, 4x5, 1x6) to ease past the line by posting 145/4 with two overs to spare.

The men in purple, thus, stretched their winning run to two games while Royals lost for the first time in four matches.

KKR (14 points from 13 games), who moved to third spot, will now need to win their last engagement with already-qualified Sunrisers Hyderabad on May 19 to secure a knockout slot.

Royals (fourth spot, 12 points from 13 games), meanwhile, will have to depend on their results and triumph against resurgent Royal Challengers Bangalore led by Virat

Kohli the same day.

KKR showed their intent from the word go with Sunil Narine (7b; 21, 2x4, 2x6) taking off-spinner K. Gowtham for 21 runs that included 6-4-6-4 in the first four balls.

The mystery spinner-turned opener was dismissed by Royals' best bowler Ben Stokes (3/15) in the next over but that hardly made a difference.

Lynn first joined hands with Nitish Rana (17b; 21, 2x4, 1x6) for a 33-run third wicket stand and combined with Karthik for a 48-run partnership for the fourth wicket before Stokes got his back. Karthik, in the company of Andre Russell (11 not out), finished the job with minimum fuss.

Earlier, in-form English wicketkeeper-batsman Jos Buttler (22 balls; 39, 5x4, 2x6) and Maharashtra's Rahul Tripathi (15b; 27, 4x4, 1x6) toyed with the KKR pacers to race to 49/0 after three overs before Russell (2/13) got the wicket of Tripathi and it was all downhill from there on.

Kuldeep (4/20) saw off skipper Ajinkya Rahane (11), Buttler, Stuart Binny (1), and Ben Stokes (11) to rack up his best figures of the season as Royals' batters paid the price for poor shot selection.

The visitors got off to a dream start with Tripathi and Buttler taking Prasidh Krishna (2/35) and Shi-

vam Mavi (1/44) to the cleaners. While Tripathi hit Krishna for a six and a hat-trick of fours, Buttler smashed Mavi to plunder 28 runs in the third over.

Tripathi was dropped off the first ball of the match by Rana at wide slip-off Mavi, who leaked only two runs in the opening over. Mavi's second over over was the season's joint-most expensive one, with the U-19 World Cup winning pacer conceding 28 against Shreyas Iyer versus Delhi Daredevils as well.

KKR bled 46 runs in 10 balls as the pair brought up their 50-run stand in 20 balls.

Tripathi fell to Russell in the West Indian's first over and the match's fifth, stitching together a 63-run opening wicket partnership off 29 deliveries.

After six overs, Royals were 68/1 with 58 runs coming in boundaries (10 fours and three sixes). But once Kuldeep castled out-of-form visiting skipper Rahane, Royals could never recover.

**Brief scores:** Kolkata Knight Riders 145/4 in 18 overs (Chris Lynn 45; Dinesh Karthik 41 not out; Ben Stokes 3/15) beat Rajasthan Royals 142 all out in 19 overs (Jos Buttler 39; Kuldeep Yadav 4/20; Andre Russell 2/13; Prasidh Krishna 2/35) by six wickets.



Kolkata Knight Riders' Kuldeep Yadav (second left) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Rajasthan Royals' Ben Stokes during their Indian Premier League match at the Eden Gardens Cricket Stadium in Kolkata yesterday. (AFP)

CYCLING / GIRO D'ITALIA

# Mohoric sprints to stage 10 win as Yates extends lead

Yates extended his overall lead over defending champion Dumoulin to 41 seconds



Slovenian rider Matej Mohoric sprints to win the 10th stage of the 101st Giro d'Italia, in Gualdo Tadino, Italy, yesterday. (Below) British rider Simon Yates. (AFP)

Reuters  
Bengaluru

Slovenian rider Matej Mohoric sprinted to victory in the 10th stage of the Giro d'Italia yesterday, while there was no change in the general classification, with Simon Yates retaining the pink jersey.

Bahrain-Merida rider Mohoric held off a strong challenge from German Nico Denz, who rides for AG2R La Mondiale, after the duo made a late break on 239-kilometre route from Penne to Gualdo Tadino, the longest stage of the race.

"I was not confident to beat Nico Denz. That's why I tried to attack him before," an elated Mohoric said after his gruelling ride. "When I saw that he was not passing, I gave it my all."

British rider Yates extended his lead in the general classification over Dutchman Tom Dumoulin, the defending champion,



to 41 seconds, with another Frenchman Thibaut Pinot a further five seconds back in third place.

Team Sky's Chris Froome's struggles continued, with Britain's four-time Tour de France champion now two minutes and 30 seconds behind the leader in 10th place.

Yates' Mitchelton-Scott team mate Esteban Chaves had started the day ahead of Dumoulin in second place overall, but was badly off the pace, with the Colombian losing time on the first climb and slipping down the leaderboard into 39th place.

"Chaves just had a bad moment on the first climb of the day. Straight after the rest day, you don't know how the body responds. I'm very disappointed for him because he's worked hard for this Giro," Yates said.

Yates took a bonus three seconds after winning an intermediate sprint earlier in the stage to strengthen his grip on the maglia rosa, and indicated he might have hit upon a strategy that might continue to pay dividends.

"I was going to go for the bonus sprint because I need to gain time on Tom Dumoulin but, when I saw Thibaut Pinot getting a lead out, I went past him," he said. "I need as many seconds as I can get so maybe

I need to go for more bonus seconds."

**STAGE 10 RESULTS (top 10)**

1. Matej Mohoric (BAH) 6hr 04min 52sec
2. Nico Denz (ALM) same time
3. Sam Bennett (BOR) at 34sec
4. Enrico Battaglin (LNL) s.t.
5. Davide Ballerini (AND) s.t.
6. Mads Schmidt (KAT) s.t.
7. Francesco Gavazzi (AND) s.t.
8. Jarlinson Pantano (TRE) s.t.
9. Gianluca Brambilla (TRE) s.t.
10. Jose Goncalves (KAT) s.t.

**OVERALL STANDINGS (top 10)**

1. Simon Yates (MIT) 43hr 42min 38sec
2. Tom Dumoulin (SUN) at 41sec
3. Thibaut Pinot (FDJ) 46
4. Domenico Pozzovivo (BAH) 1:00
5. Richard Carapaz (MOV) 1:23
6. George Bennett (LNL) 1:36
7. Rohan Dennis (BMC) 2:08
8. Pello Bilbao (AST) 2:08
9. Michael Woods (EFD) 2:28
10. Chris Froome (SKY) 2:30

SPOTLIGHT

## Russia qualify for Rugby WC after Romania, Belgium, Spain are penalised

Reuters  
London

Russia have qualified for the 2019 Rugby World Cup after Romania – who had initially secured the slot – Spain and Belgium were docked points for repeatedly using ineligible players during the qualifying competition, World Rugby said yesterday.

After a "remodelling" of the qualification process, Russia emerged top to advance to next year's tournament in Japan. It will be their second appearance following 2011 in New Zealand when they lost all four pool games.

Germany, who have never been in a World Cup, now have another chance as they are promoted to face Portugal in a playoff, though the winners face a daunting final step with a two-legged playoff against Samoa.

The winner on aggregate will qualify for Japan 2019 in Pool A, alongside the hosts, Ireland, Scotland and Russia. The loser will still have a chance of progress via the Repechage competition in November.

Yesterday's announcement is the latest twist to a complicated and controversial series of matches as, following an investigation by the independent Judicial and Disputes committee, the three nations were docked five match points for each ineligible player used.

Belgium were found to have fielded five ineligible players and were docked 30 points along with a suspended fine of 125,000 pounds (\$168,988).

Spain used Mathieu Belie and Bastien Fuster, who have both previously played for France Under-20s, in eight qualification matches, leading to a 40-point deduction and a 50,000 pounds suspended fine.

Romania had only one ineligible player, Sione Faka'osilea, who previously played for Tonga Sevens. They were given a 100,000 pounds suspended fine and their 30 docked points overturned their World Cup qualification.

All the decisions are subject to

appeal within 14 days and yesterday's announcement is unlikely to be the final word.

**REJECTED APPEAL**

Spain's initial appeal to replay their match against Belgium, when a Romanian referee was in charge and Spain's shock defeat sent Romania through at their expense, was rejected, despite the sport's governing body supporting it.

"Having considered all the evidence, including submissions from World Rugby, Rugby Europe, Spain and Belgium, the independent committee refused the request made by World Rugby and Spain to set aside the result of the match and determined that the match should not be replayed," the committee said in a statement.

In reference to the entire investigation, the committee added: "Although mistakes were made by Rugby Europe and participating unions, they had not acted in bad faith. The committee also recommended that World Rugby re-emphasise the importance and sanctity of Regulation 8 (eligibility) and any other steps that will prevent a repeat of these circumstances."

The Spanish Rugby Federation said they were very disappointed by the decisions, having sought clearance for Belie and Fuster from their French counterparts, and were considering an appeal.

"It should be recognised that the (eligibility) rule is confusing and World Rugby should have created a procedure and created a system to avoid these type of undesirable situations from happening," the federation said in a statement.

Eligibility for international rugby is a notoriously complicated affair, with countries often nominating their own choice of "capture" level team that ensures a player cannot then switch nationalities.

Recognising this, the independent committee added in its report: "World Rugby might want to consider whether to maintain a database showing players who have been captured by Unions."

### De Jager out of South Africa Tests against Wales, England

South Africa lock Lood de Jager will miss June Tests against Wales and England after tearing a chest muscle in a Super Rugby match last weekend.

The 36-cap forward suffered the injury playing for Northern Bulls against Coastal Sharks in Pretoria and a club official said he will be sidelined until September. De Jager was voted 2016 South African Rugby Player of the Year and has been outstanding for the resurgent Bulls this season under former New Zealand coach John Mitchell. Fellow lock Eben Etzebeth has also been ruled out of the June Tests as he is recovering from a knee injury sustained

last season. A further blow for the Springboks is the absence of hooker Malcolm Marx, who sustained a hamstring injury playing for Golden Lions in Super Rugby. South Africa face Wales in Washington on June 2 and England on the following three Saturdays in Johannesburg, Bloemfontein and Cape Town. The Springboks are hoping for better results under new coach Johan "Rassie" Erasmus after two largely disastrous seasons with Allister Coetzee in charge. Coetzee lost 12 of 25 Tests, including two thrashings by greatest rivals New Zealand, leading to his sacking with former Test loose forward Erasmus taking over.

FORMULA 1

# Bottas believes he is meeting targets

Reuters  
London

With three second places from five races, Valtteri Bottas believes he is hitting his targets for the Formula One season even if victory has so far escaped him.

The Finn, Mercedes team mate to four-times world champion Lewis Hamilton, would have been a winner in Azerbaijan last month but for suffering a puncture three laps from the end while leading.

In Spain on Sunday he followed race winner Hamilton in the team's first one-two finish of the campaign, albeit 22 seconds adrift on very worn tyres after a massive 47 lap stint on a single set.

"I think this year I've been meeting more or less my targets with the performance for the beginning of the year," Bottas, whose future beyond 2018 remains uncertain, told reporters after Sunday's race.

"I think I've been able to really continue good performance since the very end of last year. There's been no weekends that I've been really way off the pace, like there was a few last year. So I think I've learned from those."

"I just need to continue my development, there's never things that you can't learn more."

Bottas won the 2017 season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, after an uneven first year at Mercedes following his move from Williams to replace retired 2016 world champion Nico Rosberg. Hamilton won nine races to Bottas's three in 2017.

He started the year with a crash in qualifying in Australia, collecting a five place grid penalty for an unscheduled gearbox change that left him 15th on the grid. He finished eighth.

The Finn bounced back by outqualifying Hamilton in Bahrain and China, finishing second in both races, and was runner-up again on Sunday in a race the champion dominated.

Had he not drawn a blank in Baku, the 28-year-old would be a lot closer to Hamilton than the current 37 points.

He has had some criticism too, with Red Bull's Daniel Ricciardo – among those most likely to replace him – saying after Bahrain that he would have tried to pass Ferrari's race winner Sebastian Vettel rather than settling for second.

"I think there's been quite mixed races and the end results haven't been really I feel sometimes quite there, that I feel would have been possible with the pace we have," declared Bottas.

"The gap to Lewis was huge (in Barcelona), but there were many things that affected that."



Mercedes' driver Valtteri Bottas (left) congratulates teammate Lewis Hamilton on his victory in the Spanish Grand Prix at the Circuit de Catalunya in Montmelo, on the outskirts of Barcelona, on Sunday. (AFP)

TENNIS

## Cornet escapes ban for three doping test no shows

AFP  
Paris

French tennis player Alize Cornet has escaped a possible ban for missing three doping tests, the International Tennis Federation (ITF) confirmed yesterday.

One of Cornet's lawyers, Alexis Gramblat, had earlier told AFP that an independent tribunal "found that on the third occasion, the tester had not made every reasonable effort to find her."

The information was confirmed by an ITF press release.

The ITF has 21 days to appeal. After that the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and French

Anti-Doping Agency have another 21 days to appeal if they so wish.

Gramblat said Cornet, 28, was "delighted" and will be able to play in the Strasbourg tournament next week and, above all, at the French Open, which starts on May 27.

He explained that when the tester rang the bell at Cornet's block of flats in Cannes on October 24, "Alize could hear nothing because her intercom was broken".

Gramblat said the tester waited and when other residents emerged she could have found out which was Cornet's door, gone in and knocked on it and that not doing so represented a failure to "make every reasonable effort to contact the player".

## FOCUS

# Aspire Academy's Tri-Series season concludes

...allows them to test themselves against different playing styles, philosophies and models'

By Sports Reporter  
Doha

Last week, the final round of the year-long Tri-Series football tournament for the 2017-18 season concluded with Aspire Academy's football teams facing the U14 and U16 Tunisian and Iranian national youth teams in the same age-groups.

As many as 1,200 footballers from across Asia, Africa, Europe and South America took part in the global competition.

"Aspire Academy's main goal from this tournament is the long-term development of its individual football players. Playing is, of course, the most important learning approach for our players and we try to give them as much playing time as possible," Edorta Murua, Technical Football Director at Aspire Academy, said.

"The Tri-Series exposes them on a regular basis to international opponents and allows them to test themselves against different playing styles, philosophies and models from all over the world. It is one piece of the puzzle that should help our players develop a deeper understanding of the sport, because it is important that players are flexible and can think outside the box. No matter what challenges they face, they should be able to adapt and overcome these obstacles.

"What differentiates our players from others is the way they look at situations and the decisions they make and how they are able to make a successful transition from youth to professional football. To reach that goal, the Tri-Series is a valuable tool that teaches them a lot about decision making."

The football programme of Aspire Academy is recognised as one of the strongest in the world in terms of detection and selection of talent, as well as training, competition and evaluation of each player. The nurturing of players starts years before they reach the age to join the Academy as high school student-athletes.

Aspire Academy has installed 'Football Skills Development Centres' (FSDC) throughout Doha for boys between 6 and 11 years of age. From the age of 8, the most promising boys are identified to join the 'Aspire Feeder Groups' in which they are prepared to join the Academy.

The training philosophy of the Academy is tailored to the capabilities, talents and goals of Qatar as a footballing nation and follows a strategy that is geared towards the development of the individual player, who should be able to know what the game demands in any given situation.

Stephan Hildebrandt, Manager of Football Operations at Aspire Academy, said, "Football is an instrument to develop football personalities beyond cultural and religious differences. Qatar and especially Aspire Academy is a place where kids regardless of their cultural or religious background come together and compete on the same level, through various occasions such as the Tri-Series com-



Glimpses from the 2017-18 season of the Aspire Academy Tri-Series football competitions.



petitions. When we started four years ago, it was challenging to get the clubs to participate, now we have a waiting list. Some of the biggest clubs in the world reach out to us regularly asking to be invited so it's growing in popularity."

He added that: "By confronting the big teams regularly, the Tri-Series tournament has helped our student-athletes not to be intimidated by any big names. We have succeeded in creating a spirit of confidence among our boys in this way.

The games create moments of responsibility, of pressure, of decision making, preparing our boys in all aspects – psychologically, technically, tactically and physically."

This year's competitions saw participation of local, regional and international clubs from African, European, Asian and South American countries. Some of these include Tunisian national youth team players, as well as football club Étoile Sportive du Sahel, Spanish club Celta de

Vigo, Aspire-owned Cultural y Deportiva Leonesa, Dutch club AZ Alkmaar, German club Eintracht Frankfurt, English club Leeds United FC, Abuel Cyprus, Greek club Apoel F.C. Ecuadorian club C.S.D. Independiente del Valle, Pakistani club Karachi United as well as Japanese clubs Ventforett Kofu and Shonan Bellmare. The tournament also welcomed national team players across various age-groups from Tunisia, Malaysia, Lebanon and Iran.

## SPOTLIGHT

## QCFL 'perfect' to bring communities together through football

The Qatar Community Football League (QCFL) is the ideal vehicle for social inclusion, community spirit and grassroots football development, according to one of the popular amateur competition's organisers.

The competition, founded by Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (SC), came to a conclusion at Aspire Dome on Friday evening, with Alys J FC defeating MTM in front of more than 300 spectators. Following its launch in 2016, the QCFL concluded its second season with more than 1,500 registered players, in 36 teams across three divisions.

Omar Saad, from the SC's tournament delivery partner Evolution Sports, said the QCFL provided the perfect platform for people from all walks of life to play organised amateur football on a regular basis.

"The biggest gain from the QCFL is that it has brought together players from different cultures, nationalities and backgrounds," he said.

Saad, a former coach at the Liverpool FC Academy, continued: "It has been fantastic to watch workers and bank manag-

ers meet and bond over a game of football. There have been many situations where strangers from different continents have come together in the same team and finished the season as friends."

The pyramid league, built on a two-team promotion and relegation model, was founded as a 24-team tournament in 2016 as part of the SC's commitment to grow the grassroots game across Qatar.

In addition to the three tiers, the 2017/18 edition of the QCFL also featured a knockout cup competition, with teams across the three divisions participating.

Another draw for grassroots players across Qatar has been the tournament's access to Aspire's world-class facilities, which were praised by cup winners Alys J SC and Premier League champions Nakheel Landscapes.

"My players are so excited at winning the cup. Competing in such amazing surroundings has boosted their confidence no end. Many of them are workers from developing nations and though immensely talented footballers they have had no previous access to such facilities before the QCFL came along. I have to thank the SC and Aspire for everything they have given my team." (SC.qa)



ALYSJ coach Lazar Pavlovic (in blue) celebrates with his players after their win in the Qatar Community Football League at Aspire Dome.

### Qatar to open Asian Men's Junior Handball campaign against Syria

The Asian Handball Federation announced the match schedule for the 2018 Asian Men's Junior Handball Championship which will take place in Salalah, Oman. Qatar team will begin its campaign in the prestigious tourna-

ment against Syria on July 17 before locking horns against Palestine and conclude their participation against Iraq. The championship also serves as a qualifying tournament for the IHF Junior World Championship 2019.

## BOTTOMLINE

## Are we in danger of being seduced by a Woods fairytale?

By Ewan Murray  
The Guardian

There is a recurring danger of sporting dreams blurring reality. The hype around Tiger Woods was once justified but the reality of recent months applies context often missing in the giddy analysis. Woods has performed brilliantly simply to be competitive again after physical trouble so acute he struggled to sit down for dinner. But there, for now, the story ends.

Woods' latest outing at the Players Championship had him finish seven – almost two shots per round – adrift of the winner Webb Simpson. The 42-year-old tied 55th the previous weekend in Charlotte, 32nd at the Masters and trailed the victorious Rory McIlroy by eight at the conclusion of the Arnold Palmer Invitational.

Woods' share of second at the Valspar Championship in early March was impressive but the fact Paul Casey could swat him aside on the Sunday means we are in danger of being seduced by a fairytale.

And still, excitement flows. "It is incredibly close," the former world No 1 David Duval said. "We've all questioned what is the top for him in

this comeback. What can his body do? What can his new golf game do?"

The Golf Channel analyst added: "Having had the opportunity to speak to him about it, we were all in a hurry to judge what was going on. I sat up here and said: 'Let's give him the starts, let's give him the summer, let's give him the year, let's see if he can gain some of the freedom he needs.'

"Well, it looked to me this week that he regained that freedom. I watched the body pass the club through the downswing, watched him maintain his spine angle through that process. He hit some monster tee shots, incredible iron shots and the freedom with which he did that we just hadn't seen.

"I still want to give him more events but what I saw this weekend makes me excited it could be incredibly close and that must make him excited. I hope he plays sooner rather than later. I hope he doesn't go home and just hit golf balls. I want to see him play rounds under tournament conditions and expose himself exactly like he did this weekend. Because he did that and he performed."

To an extent, that is. From the position of making the Sawgrass cut by a stroke, Woods raced to eight under par after 12 third-round holes. He was

firmly in the tournament mix. From there he played a gettable closing stretch in plus one. In the final round another fast start – he was six under on the 13th tee – was offset by the playing of holes 14 to 18 in three over. It seems reasonable to infer that, when Woods tries to press for victory – and he has to, having not been the man to catch at any event on this comeback – short-comings appear. The same happened at the Arnold Palmer, where Woods pulled a tee shot into a back garden, three holes from home.

"He'll win sometime soon enough," said Jordan Spieth, who partnered Woods on Sunday. "He's certainly playing well enough to do so. His game, if I compare it to other guys I'm playing with day to day who are winning tournaments, is right up there."

Woods begins this week having leapt to 80th in the world rankings, with a new name on top. Justin Thomas' outperforming of Dustin Johnson at the Players means the US PGA champion is the world No 1 for the first time.

"It's not something where I just want to do it once," Thomas said. "I want to do it for a really long time. I want to have it for a really long time because that means I'm playing better than everybody else for an extended period."

