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GULF TIMES SPORT



CRICKET

Sri Lanka edge Australia in last-ball thriller to clinch series

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FOOTBALL

Brahimi joins Gharafa after three seasons with Rayyan

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Algerian midfielder **Yacine Brahimi** has joined Al Gharafa after spending three seasons with another Qatar Stars League outfit Al Rayyan. After Gharafa announced Brahimi's arrival, the player himself took to his Instagram handle to confirm the news.

Brahimi thanked the Rayyan family for their support. "I would like to thank you for these three beautiful years with Rayyan FC and especially for your un-failing support," Brahimi said.

"I spent three beautiful years full of unforgettable moments. I thank my teammates, all the technical staff and all the people working for Rayyan FC. And especially a big thanks to all the supporters, who since my arrival, have always supported me. This great club will forever be in my heart. I wish you lots of success and trophies, Inshallah," the 32-year-old added.

Brahimi will wear number 8 shirt in the colours of the seven-time Qatar Stars League (QSL) champions Gharafa, who will present the Algerian at a press conference today.

Brahimi, who was part of the Algerian team when they clinched the AFCON

title, has been wearing the national colours since 2013 and has scored 14 goals in 66 international appearances.

Andrea Stramaccioni-coached Al Gharafa missed out on a top-four finish at last season's QSL and ended up in fifth position with 30 points, and they hope for a significant improvement in the next season after roping in Brahimi, who has played influential role for his national team and previous clubs.

The Cheetahs registered nine wins, three draws and lost 10 matches, and scored the most number of goals after champions Al Sadd (80) and runners-up Al Duhail (59).

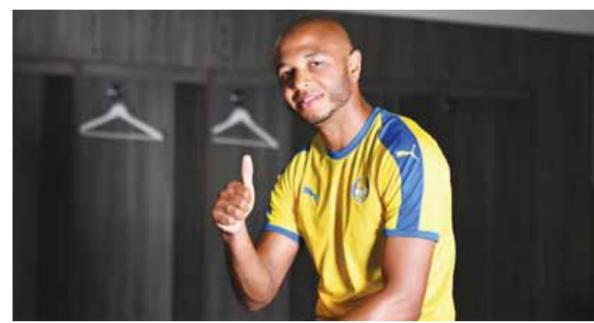
Al Gharafa's AFC Champions League

campaign this year ended after they finished third in their Group with five points from one win and two draws.

The former Rennes, Clermont, Granada and Porto player, Brahimi made his Qatar Stars League debut in July 2019 and scored 15 goals and assisted 5 times in 22 appearances in his first season in which the Lions finished second.

During his time in Qatar, Brahimi has scored 33 goals and provided 18 assists in 83 matches in all competitions at Al Rayyan.

Al Gharafa will kick off their new QSL season when they will meet Al Saliya on August 2 at Khalifa International Stadium.



WORLD SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Local star Milak shines but Dressel withdraws from two final races

'When I came in I felt this huge expectation, I got the huge ovation which was so good'

AFP
Budapest

A capacity crowd at the World Swimming Championships was deprived of one star last night as Caeleb Dressel scratched but saw the one they wanted, roaring local hero Kristof Milak to a world record. Dressel, the defending champion, pulled out of the 100m freestyle semi-finals and mixed medley relay just before the session.

Dressel had swum the morning heats in the 100 finishing second fastest to Romanian teenage sensation David Popovici. Dressel won the event at the last two world championships and at last year's Olympics. "A decision has been made by Team USA in consultation with Caeleb, his coach and the team's medical staff for him to withdraw from the 100-metre freestyle event on medical grounds. The team will determine his participation in the events later in the week," said a US team statement.

Popovici, a 17-year-old who had become the first Romanian man to win a world title the night before, cruised to the fastest time in the semis. For the first time this week a packed house in the Budapest pool screamed and clapped as Milak, the reigning Olympic champion, racing in lane 4 which goes to the fastest qualifier, responded with 1min 50.34sec to shave 0.39sec off the world record he set winning the last world title in 2019.

It was Hungary's first gold of the competition. "It's a completely different experience to go out there to the pool in front of so many people who are rooting for you and who you are swimming for, it's a mutual thing," Milak told Hungarian television.

"When I came in I felt this huge expectation, I got the huge ovation which was so good to feel," he said. "When I stepped on the blocks and got ready I felt as if I was in a dream, a feeling of being so in the flow. This is my home, my pool. I train here, I race four, lane four belongs to me. I really wanted to show something big for these fantastic people."

Milak beat France's Leon March-



Hungary's Kristof Milak in action en route to winning the men's 200m butterfly final at the World Swimming Championships in Budapest yesterday. (Reuters)

and by a huge 3.03sec. "Now it hurts a lot. I can't feel my legs," Milak said.

Olympic champion Bobby Finke made another late surge to grab gold in the men's 800m freestyle. Ukrainian Mykhailo Romanchuk led for half the race and went into the final turn first with Finke back in fourth.

But, as he did in Tokyo, the American's last lap sprint carried him to victory. His time of 7min 39.36sec was an American record. "I was really nervous going into that race, it was incredibly stressful, especially the last year after Tokyo my expectations immediately rose a lot, so I am just happy to get that out of the way," said Finke.

German Olympic open-water champion Florian Wellbrock also slipped past his training partner Romanchuk at the end to grab silver. The Ukrainian repeated his Ol-

ympic bronze. "I'm really happy as this time is really good for me," he said. "Enough for just a bronze but it shows how close these guys are. I am very happy to be part of an amazing battle."

Wellbrock invited Romanchuk to join him in Magdeburg following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February. Another American, Nic Fink, won the men's breaststroke 50m sprint. He edged 100m gold medalist Nicolo Martinenghi by a microscopic 0.03sec with another American Michael Andrew third. "I didn't see anything in the final five metres, I was kind of a blackout," Fink said.

Yang Junxuan won the women's 200m freestyle to take China's first gold of the week. The United States ended the evening by taking gold in the 100m mixed medley relay ahead of Australia and the Netherlands.



FROM LEFT: USA's Claire Curzan, Torri Huske, Nic Fink and Hunter Armstrong pose with their gold medals after winning the mixed 4x100m medley relay at the World Swimming Championships at Duna Arena in Budapest. (AFP)

TENNIS

Djokovic top seed for Wimbledon in absence of Medvedev, Zverev



Reuters
London

Wimbledon champion **Novak Djokovic** will head into next week's tournament as the men's top seed with Russian world number one Daniil Medvedev banned from taking part while Germany's second-ranked Alexander Zverev is out injured.

Organisers of the grasscourt Grand Slam have banned players from Russia and Belarus from playing at this year's Wimbledon following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, which Russia calls a 'special operation'. Zverev had surgery on torn ligaments in his right ankle this month after he was forced to retire from his French Open semi-final against Rafael Nadal.

Djokovic, who was unable to defend his 2021 Australian Open title and the 2,000 ranking points he earned due to his non-vaccinated status against Covid-19, recently lost his world number one spot to Medvedev.

The Serbian, who has won the last three editions of the grasscourt major, will slip further down the rankings after Wimbledon as he will lose another 2,000 points with the ATP and WTA stripping the tournament of points. The absence of Medvedev and Zverev means Nadal, who is halfway through a possible calendar year Slam after winning the Australian and French Open titles, to be seeded second.

It also results in Djokovic and Nadal finding themselves in different halves of the draw and they cannot face each other until the men's final on July 10. The duo met in this year's Roland Garros quarter-final where the Spaniard triumphed.

Britain has two players in the top 10 seeds at their home major with Cameron Norrie ninth while US Open champion Emma Raducanu is 10th in the absence of Belarussian Aryna Sabalenka.

Poland's world number one Iga Swiatek will be the women's top seed with Estonian Anett Kontaveit the number two. Polish world No.1 Swiatek enters the tournament on the back of a 35-match winning streak after claiming her second Roland-Garros trophy in early June. She has won her last six events and has not lost a match since mid-February.

Swiatek has never been past the fourth round at the All England Club but the 21-year-old won the girls' singles title in 2018. Last year's women's singles champion, Ashleigh Barty, announced her sudden retirement in March and therefore won't be back to defend her title.

Wimbledon organisers had previously used a computer-based system favouring results on grasscourts in the previous two years to determine the seedings but from the 2021 edition seedings mirror the world rankings.

FOCUS

Unwell Stokes misses England training session

AFP
London

England captain **Ben Stokes** missed training after feeling unwell yesterday as his side started their preparations for the Headingley Test.

Stokes was absent while the rest of the squad trained ahead of tomorrow's first day of the final Test in the three-match series.

An England and Wales Cricket Board spokesperson indicated that Stokes had tested negative for Covid-19 yesterday morning. Stokes is being kept away from

the group as a precautionary measure.

The 31-year-old, in his first Test series as skipper, will be assessed again ahead of today's net session.

Later yesterday, England batting coach Marcus Trescothick tested positive for Covid.

The ECB said Trescothick is "currently in isolation at home and is being monitored daily. Details of his return to the England set-up will be announced in due course."

Stokes hit 75 from 70 balls in the second innings of England's second Test victory over New Zealand at Trent Bridge.

That was England's second successive win against the Test world champions, clinching their first Test series triumph since January 2021.

New Zealand have had several positive Covid cases in their squad over the last couple of weeks.

Black Caps skipper Kane Williamson was forced to miss the second Test after testing positive on the eve of the match in Nottingham.

As well as Williamson, the tourists have seen Henry Nicholls, Devon Conway, Michael Bracewell and two members of their backroom team return

positive results since arriving in England. All four players are fit and available to play in Leeds this week.

While England hope to avoid a Covid outbreak, twin brothers Jamie and Craig Overton are dreaming of a potentially taking the field together for the hosts at Headingley.

The 6ft 5in seam-bowling siblings are on stand-by should England decide to rotate their pace attack with the series already won.

For the uncapped Jamie, who is the younger sibling by three minutes, it is uncharted territory, while Craig is hoping to add to his

eight caps. The duo have played together numerous times over the years, with North Devon, Somerset and England Under-19s, but came head to head in first-class cricket for the first time just a matter of days ago. Jamie, who left Taunton for Surrey in 2020, struck his brother on the helmet with a rapid bouncer during a County Championship match last week leading to a delayed concussion diagnosis.

"I think any sibling rivalry is always going to have a bit of extra spice and me and Craig are probably even spicier than most people," Jamie said.

"The family obviously didn't

like seeing Craig on the floor but I think they would have told us off if we weren't giving our all."

Despite that bruising encounter, Craig insisted there would be no hard feelings if only one of them was selected this week.

"It's been like that since we were 16 years old. My first game of first-class cricket we were competing for the same spot and I ended up playing," he said.

"We'd both said to each other 'whatever happens, we'll be supportive' and we've always been like that. We want what's best for the team and if that means one of us misses out, that's the way it is."



CRICKET

Thrilling finish as Sri Lanka beat Australia

Hosts prevail in the fourth ODI to lead the 5-match series 3-1 after a last-ball finish under lights in Colombo

Reuters
Colombo

Sri Lanka beat Australia by four runs in a tense one-day international (ODI) that went down to the final ball in Colombo yesterday to take an unassailable 3-1 lead in the five-match series.

Put into bat, Sri Lanka's top order failed to get going as they slumped to 34-3 but Charith Asalanka (110) and Dhananjaya de Silva (60) stitched together a 101-run partnership to give the hosts a respectable total of 258.

Asalanka came in and smashed 10 fours and a six for his maiden ODI century before Pat Cummins finally dismissed him at the death when the batsman was caught by skipper Aaron Finch as he tried to clear the deep midwicket boundary.

In response, Sri Lanka made the perfect start when Finch was dismissed for a duck but his opening partner David Warner looked well set to score his 19th ODI hundred before he fell agonisingly short.

Warner hit 12 fours before he was stumped on 99 off the bowling of Dhananjaya de Silva thanks to lightning-quick work behind the stumps from Niroshan Dickwella.

Australia's middle order were unable to capitalise on starts but fast bowler Cummins threatened to help Australia level the series with a knock of 35 before he was trapped leg before wicket by Chamika Karunaratne in the penultimate over.

Needing 19 off the final over, number 10 batsman Matthew Kuhnemann smashed three boundaries before Dasun Shanaka kept his nerve on the final ball to have him caught in the covers and see Sri Lanka over the line.

The final ODI will also be played in Colombo on Friday before Australia play two Tests in Galle starting June 29.

SCOREBOARD

Sri Lanka
N. Dickwella *st* Carey *b* Maxwell 1
P. Nissanka *c* Carey *b* Marsh 13



Sri Lanka's Dhananjaya de Silva (second left) celebrates after the dismissal of Australia's David Warner (second right) during their fourth one-day international at the R Premadasa International Cricket Stadium in Colombo yesterday. (AFP)

K. Mendis *b* Cummins 14
D. de Silva *c* Maxwell *b* Marsh 60
C. Asalanka *c* Finch *b* Cummins 110
D. Shanaka *run out* (Marsh/Carey) 4
D. Wellalage *c* Warner *b* Kuhnemann 19
C. Karunaratne *lbw* *b* Kuhnemann 7
W. Hasaranga *not out* 21
J. Vandersay *run out* (Cummins/Carey) 0
M. Theekshana *run out* (*sub* Sweeps) 0
Extras (*lb*, *nb*, *w*) 9
Total (*all out*, 49 overs) 258
Fall of wickets: 1-5 (Dickwella), 2-26 (Mendis), 3-34 (Nissanka), 4-135 (de Silva), 5-150 (Shanaka), 6-207 (Wellalage), 7-222 (Karunaratne), 8-256 (Asalanka), 9-257

(Vandersay), 10-258 (Theekshana)
Bowling: Hazlewood 10-0-45-0 (w), Maxwell 8-0-49-1 (w), Kuhnemann 8-0-56-2 (w), Cummins 9-1-37-2 (w), Marsh 7-1-29-2 (nb), Green 5-0-27-0, Labuschagne 2-0-13-0
Australia (target 259)
D. Warner *st* Dickwella *b* de Silva 99
A. Finch *lbw* *b* Karunaratne 0
M. Marsh *c* de Silva *b* Wellalage 26
M. Labuschagne *lbw* *b* Vandersay 14
A. Carey *c* Wellalage *b* Hasaranga 19
T. Head *b* de Silva 27
G. Maxwell *lbw* Theekshana 1
C. Green *b* Vandersay 13

P. Cummins *lbw* *b* Karunaratne 35
M. Kuhnemann *c* Asalanka *b* Shanaka 15
J. Hazlewood *not out* 0
Extras (*lb*, *nb*, *w*) 5
Total (*all out*, 50 overs) 254
Fall of wickets: 1-3 (Finch), 2-66 (Marsh), 3-101 (Labuschagne), 4-131 (Carey), 5-189 (Head), 6-190 (Maxwell), 7-192 (Warner), 8-223 (Green), 9-240 (Cummins), 10-254 (Kuhnemann)
Bowling: Karunaratne 5-1-19-2 (w), Theekshana 10-1-40-1, Hasaranga 10-0-52-1, Wellalage 5-0-29-1 (nb), de Silva 10-0-39-2, Vandersay 7-0-40-2 (w), Asalanka 1-0-7-0, Shanaka 2-0-27-1

ATHLETICS

All eyes on Coleman, Richardson at the US championships

Reuters
Oregon

Christian Coleman and Sha'Carri Richardson will battle to stake their claims as the king and queen of American track in Eugene, Oregon this week, as the 100m specialists headline the US championships.

The top three finishers in the meeting who meet certain qualifying standards and reigning global title-holders advance to the first world championships ever held in the United States at the same Oregon track starting on July 15.

Returning world champion Coleman, who came back to action in January after serving an 18-month suspension for breaching anti-doping whereabouts rules, said he was "the same guy" he was when he grabbed the 2019 global title in 9.76 seconds.

"I feel like it's there," Coleman told reporters after winning last week's NYC Grand Prix 100m in 9.92. "When you have a long lay-off, obviously it's going to affect you in some kind of way, so this whole season to me is a learning experience."

He will be closely challenged by Olympic silver medalist Fred Kerley and US Olympic trials champion Trayvon Bromell in one of the highlights of the meeting, which begins tomorrow.

Kerley won the distance in 9.92 at the Rome Diamond League meet earlier this month, while Bromell produced a wind-aided 9.75 at the UNF Invitational in April.

The ebullient fan-favourite Richardson, whose Olympic dreams ended early due to a 30-day suspension for a positive cannabis test, has declared for both the 100m and 200m.

The 22-year-old finished a hundredth of a second off her personal best to win the 100m earlier this month in Florida in a wind-aided 10.73.

"I feel phenomenal," Richardson told reporters after producing a 10.85 to finish second behind compatriot Aleia Hobbs at the NYC Grand Prix.

The meeting will also feature the last US championship appearance by retiring Allyson Felix, the most decorated American athlete, in the 400m, and four-time world champion and twice Olympic triple jump gold medalist Christian Taylor, on a comeback mission after missing the Tokyo Games due to an injury.



The men's 200m will be Tokyo bronze medalist Noah Lyles' sole focus, and Gabrielle Thomas, who collected bronze on the women's side at the Games and is the third-fastest woman in the distance, will battle against Abby Steiner, who produced a season-leading 21.80 earlier this month.

The women's 400m hurdles will offer an epic rivalry between Olympic silver medalist Sydney McLaughlin, who won gold in Tokyo in a world-record 51.46, and reigning World Champion Dalilah Muhammad.

An intriguing rivalry also is taking shape in the men's 110m hurdles, with world champion Grant Holloway's title under threat from Devon Allen.

The Philadelphia Eagles wide receiver beat Holloway in New York earlier this month in an all-time third-fastest 12.84.

"I would say I am just a great athlete. I bet that if I had played tennis 15 years ago, I would be a pro tennis player or golf, whatever," he told reporters after winning the Oslo Diamond League meet. I enjoy doing a lot of sports. It is really hard to be great at anything on this level."

Another Oregon favourite, world shot put record holder Ryan Crouser will face world champion Joe Kovacs, with Tokyo silver medalist Raven Saunders up against world indoor silver medalist Chase Ealey on the women's side.

India coach Dravid addresses players



Coach Rahul Dravid (right) talks to India players during a team training in Leicester yesterday. India are getting ready for a month's tour in which they will play one Test, three ODIs and an equal number of T20s against England. India will also play a couple of T20s against Ireland during this trip.

BOXING

British star Joshua to 'keep things simple' in Red Sea rematch with Usyk

AFP
Jeddah

Anthony Joshua promised to stick to a simple gameplan yesterday when he tries to wrest back his world heavyweight titles from Ukraine's Oleksandr Usyk in Saudi Arabia.

The towering Joshua lost by unanimous decision last September in London to Usyk, who returned home to fight the Russian invasion before being given a special exemption from military duty.

The August 20 "Rage on the Red Sea" in Jeddah will be the second fight in Saudi Arabia for Joshua, 32, who avenged a shock loss to Andy Ruiz Jr in Riyadh in December 2019.

"The fight with Usyk, he bust my arse for some rounds. I had to take that defeat like a man," Joshua, wearing white headphones around his neck, told a press conference in Jeddah.



"But I hold myself accountable. I'm someone who can admit when I'm wrong and hold my head high. I don't like to overcomplicate the situation, because there's genius in simplicity. Sometimes if you keep things simple, you can achieve great things."

The two fighters faced off in a long stare-down for the cameras after the press conference, where Saudi officials talked up their commitment to grass-

roots boxing and developing the sport.

Usyk, 35, face partially hidden by a bucket hat with a Ukrainian flag, referenced the turmoil at home but said he preferred to let his fighting do the talking. "As we all know we are not in the best conditions at the moment back at home. But we are doing what we have to do. We are doing our job and we are working hard to achieve our goals," he said.

No sooner had Usyk defeated then WBA, IBF and WBO champion Joshua 117-112, 116-112 and 115-113 in London than a rematch clause was activated. Joshua has made changes to his coaching staff as he bids to be crowned world heavyweight champion for a third time, adding Robert Garcia added to his corner to work alongside Angel Fernandez.

"Alex is a great fighter - he's got the strength, he's got reflexes, he's got accuracy, he's got everything. But Anthony has got all the tools to beat him," said Garcia.

TENNIS

Players set to be allowed off-court coaching

Men's governing body ATP says it will trial the new plan from July including the US Open and season-ending finals

Reuters
London

The ATP will trial off-court coaching in the second half of the year, with players set to receive instructions in qualifying and main draw matches in tournaments including the US Open and the ATP Finals, the governing body of men's tennis said yesterday.

The trial will permit an individual to coach a player both verbally and non-verbally from a designated seat provided that it does not interrupt play or hinder an opponent.

It commences from the week of July 11 and run through to the season-ending ATP Finals in Turin in November, in a move that the body says will enhance fan experience at tournaments.

"Various coaching rules have been trialled across the sport in recent years, including on-court coaching and coaching via headsets," the ATP said in a statement.

"Today's announcement brings alignment for the second half of the season across the ATP Tour, US Open and the WTA Tour, where an off-court coaching trial is already in place."

Verbal coaching must consist of only a few words and will be allowed only when the player is at the same end of the court as his coach while non-verbal coaching - through hand signals - will be permitted at any time.

"Coaches may not speak to their player when the player leaves the court for any reason," the ATP added.

The ATP said that penalties and fines would apply for abuse or misuse of the coaching conditions and that the trial will be assessed at the end of the 2022 season for potential inclusion in future.

Meanwhile Russian-born tennis player Natela Dzalamidze yesterday said her decision to change nationality to Georgian was motivated by her desire to play at the Olympics and that being able to compete at Wimbledon was a bonus. In April, the



The 2021 US Open singles champion Daniil Medvedev of Russia poses for a photo with his coach Gilles Cervara at the trophy ceremony on September 12, 2021 in Flushing, New York. (Garrett Ellwood/USTA)

All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC) banned Russian and Belarusian players from competing at Wimbledon due to the invasion of Ukraine, which Moscow calls a "special military operation".

Belarus has been a key staging area for the invasion.

Dzalamidze's nationality is Georgian in Wimbledon's entry list, allowing her to partner Serbian Aleksandra Krunic in the women's doubles at the Grand Slam.

The WTA Tour said in a statement Dzalamidze had complied with the regulations for changing nationality.

"In Natela's case, she submitted a

Georgian passport and ID as she has dual citizenship, and, as a result, her nationality has been officially changed within the WTA system," it said. "This took place prior to the finalisation and release of the Wimbledon entry lists."

Dzalamidze, whose father is Georgian, said the depth of Russian tennis and the country's suspension from the Billie Jean King Cup, which players have to compete in to fulfil ITF participation requirements for the Olympics, led to the switch.

"My decision was made because I am focusing on my career and would like to have the chance to compete at the Olympic Games," the 29-year-old told *The Times*.

"The first discussion I had with the WTA was during Indian Wells at the beginning of March.

"If I made the decision to play for Georgia and have a chance to play Wimbledon, why not? At the moment I have my best ranking and my perspective is now much better in Georgia."

Wimbledon, which begins on June 27, has been stripped of its ranking points by the ATP and WTA Tours over its decision to exclude players from Russia and Belarus.

FOCUS

Serena makes winning return in Eastbourne doubles after year out



USA's Serena Williams (right) and Tunisia's Ons Jabeur celebrate after winning against Spain's Sara Sorribes Tormo and Czech Republic's Marie Bouzkova (not pictured) at the Eastbourne International. (AFP)

AFP
Eastbourne, United Kingdom

Serena Williams made a winning comeback after a year on the sidelines as the American legend teamed with Ons Jabeur to beat Sara Sorribes Tormo and Marie Bouzkova 2-6, 6-3, 13-11 in the Eastbourne International doubles yesterday.

Williams, a 23-time Grand Slam singles champion, was back in action for the first time since she made a tearful exit from Wimbledon last year. The 40-year-old suffered a leg injury during her Wimbledon first round match against Aliaksandra Sasnovich and had not been seen on court since.

Before Williams made the surprise announcement of her return last week, rumours of retirement had swirled around her for several months. But, with Wimbledon starting on June 27, Williams finally resumed her career, playing with Jabeur at the Wimbledon warm-up event by the Sussex seaside.

Williams and Tunisia's Jabeur, who is third in the WTA singles rankings, saw off Spain's Sorribes Tormo and Bouzkova of the Czech Republic in the last-16 tie. Although Williams was far from her vintage best, she will be encouraged by her first outing for 12 months. She and Jabeur will face Japan's Shuko Aoyama and Taiwan's Chan Hao-ching in the quarter-finals.

Serena has been given a wildcard to play in the singles at Wimbledon as she restarts her history bid. Williams is one Grand Slam crown away from equalling Australian Margaret Court's record of 24 singles titles at the majors. The last of Williams' 23 Grand Slam singles titles came at the Australian Open in 2017.

Since then she has lost four Grand Slam finals, including at Wimbledon in 2018 and 2019. Williams won the seventh and

most recent of her seven Wimbledon singles titles in 2016. Serena, who became a mother in 2017, has plummeted to 1,204th in the WTA rankings due to her period out of action. Her long-time coach, Patrick Mouratoglou, revealed in April that he had taken on a new role with Simona Halep.

Wimbledon is widely considered Williams' best chance of winning another Grand Slam and this was her first step towards that goal. After so long away, Serena soaked up the applause during a raucous reception from the crowd when she walked onto court in the early evening sunshine.

Williams' husband Alexis Ohanian was watching from the stands as his wife made an understandably rusty start. A missed smash at the net from Serena allowed her opponents to hold serve in the second game of the match before the Williams-Jabeur partnership fell 3-1 down.

With Williams' groundstrokes initially lacking their usual precision, the first set quickly slipped away. Serena was appearing in doubles competition on grass for the first time since 2016, when she won Wimbledon with her sister Venus.

The 14-time Grand Slam doubles champion was well short of peak form and Bouzkova and Sorribes Tormo twice led by a break at the start of the second set. But Williams showed the tenacious spirit that has defined her career, striking the ball cleaner and crisper as she and Jabeur hit back to level the match at one-set all.

Serena had grown into the contest and the match-deciding tie-break tested her nerves as well as her shot-making. Serena squandered a match point on her serve with a wayward forehand at 9-8 and Jabeur wasted another at 10-9. But the pair saved a match point from Bouzkova and Sorribes Tormo at 10-11, reeling off the last three points to clinch a dramatic victory in the dusk.

GOLF

4-time major winner Koepka set to leap to LIV Golf Series

AFP
New York

Brooks Koepka is expected to join the LIV Golf Series and participate in the first event in the US on June 30, according to multiple reports. Koepka and Abraham Ancer of Mexico are ranked Nos 19 and 20 in the Official World Golf Rankings but reportedly will depart the PGA Tour for the LIV in the coming days. The building current behind the start-up tour would include eight of the top 50 in the OWGR, including Koepka's nemesis Bryson DeChambeau (30th). Ancer withdrew from the US Open last week citing illness.

As friction builds between players and PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan, 17 players have been suspended from playing in Tour events, including Phil Mickelson and Dustin Johnson.

Presumably, Koepka, a four-time major winner, would be added to the banned list, as would Ancer, 31. Spain's Jon Rahm, who said he was offered \$400m to join the LIV, and Ireland's Rory McIlroy have been vocal in their position against leaving the PGA Tour. But the limited schedule of events and "off course" opportunities are being cited by players who have signed on to the LIV, including Mickelson.

Monahan was scheduled to sit down with players in Connecticut today with a press conference scheduled tomorrow.



Brooks Koepka plays his shot from the eighth tee during the second round of the US Open in Brookline, Massachusetts, on Friday. (USA TODAY Sports)

row. The Travelers Championship kicks off this week, and Koepka is entered in the event. *ESPN* reported the PGA Tour's players advisory council also was meeting today before the Monahan powwow.

Koepka is close friends with Johnson and his brother, Chase, played in the inaugural event in London. Injuries have slowed Brooks Koepka since he was ranked No. 1 in the world for 47 weeks, recording back-to-back wins at both the PGA Championship (2018-19) and U.S.

Open (2017-18). Koepka, 32, said before the US Open that media was responsible for the uproar over the player exodus to the LIV, and giving the new tour "legs."

"I'm here at the US Open," he said. "I'm ready to play the US Open, and I think it kind of sucks, too, you are all throwing this black cloud over the US Open. It's one of my favourite events. I don't know why you guys keep doing that. The more legs you give (LIV Golf), the more you keep talking about it."

EUROPEAN TOUR RETURNS TO SINGAPORE IN 2023

The DP World Tour will return to Singapore in 2023 for the first time in nine years, as the golf organisation beefs up its Asian footprint, it said yesterday.

Players will tee off for the Singapore Classic at the Laguna National Golf Resort Club on February 9 next year.

The tour last stopped in the city-state in 2014 at the same course. Previous winners of the tour's Singapore events include Scottish legend Colin Montgomerie, China's Zhang Lianwei and Liang Wenchong, and local star Mardian Mamat.

"Asia continues to be an important region for the DP World Tour and we look forward to announcing further exciting events there in due course," European Tour group chief executive Keith Pelley said in a statement.

Peter Kwee, Laguna National's chairman, said: "We have a long history of hosting DP World Tour championship golf... We're excited to once more welcome many of the world's best players to our Club." With prize money of \$2m, the tournament will be one of the region's top sporting events, organisers said.

The DP World Tour was first held in Singapore for two editions of the Johnnie Walker classic, won by Nick Faldo in 1993 at the Singapore Island Golf Club and Ian Woosnam in 1996 at the Tanah Merah Country Club.

Nick Faldo to retire from broadcasting

Nick Faldo plans to retire from broadcasting after 16 years with *CBS* and *Golf Channel*, which followed a successful career on the course.

Faldo, who turns 65 in July, made the announcement yesterday, but he will be alongside Jim Nantz in Tower 18 this week at the Travelers Championship. Faldo said his final event will be the Wynnham Championship on Aug. 4-7, signing off 43 years after he made his golf debut

at the same event - then known as the Greater Greensboro Open. "After much consideration and discussions late last year with my business manager and more privately with my wife, Lindsay, we together concluded, and I decided that I will step down from Tower 18." Faldo said in a statement yesterday. "It was a 'great run' since October 2006, when I was privileged to become lead analyst for *CBS* and have

the second-best and highly coveted seat in golf, sitting next to Jim Nantz." Faldo said being on the road since he was 18 years old was a big factor in his decision. "That's a long run of airports, hotel rooms and restaurant meals," Faldo said. A 33-time winner on tour, including six major titles, Faldo said he will dedicate more time to family at his Montana farm and continue his golf course design business. Faldo has designed or contrib-

uted to course construction projects in 20 countries. Faldo said he informed *CBS* in January at Pebble Beach of his retirement plans. Former Masters champion Trevor Immelman, 42, was named Faldo's replacement. "Sir Nick has had a remarkable career on Network television for nearly 20 years and is one of the most accomplished commentators to ever sit in the 18th tower," said *CBS* Sports chairman Sean McManus in a statement.

Svitolina wants to see things return to normal in Ukraine

Former women's tennis world number three **Elina Svitolina** says she hopes one day to return and see her octogenarian grandmother who has been trapped in the Black Sea port of Odessa since Russia invaded Ukraine.

"I hope that this will end one day and I can come back and see her," said Svitolina. The 27-year-old was speaking a week after she and Ukrainian Champions League-winning football legend Andriy Shevchenko were asked on a Zoom call by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to become ambassadors for United24.

The charity was launched by Zelensky to collect donations to cover Ukraine's most pressing needs: Defence and de-mining, medical aid and to rebuild the country which has been devastated since Vladimir Putin launched the invasion in February.

Svitolina is expecting her first child - a baby girl - in October with French tennis star Gael Monfils but says that happy news is offset by her anxiety for family members who remain in Ukraine. Svitolina's parents and brother managed to leave but aside from her grandmother Tamara, her uncle and his family remain in Odessa. The city, a multicultural crossroads of a million inhabitants, is under de facto Russian blockade and has found itself isolated. Svitolina, a Wimbledon and US Open semi-finalist in 2019, says it is especially harrowing for her grandmother's generation who experienced the Nazi invasion in 1941. "It is tough for older people to get through another war," she said. "The deficit of food, staying at home or in a basement for days... for them it is extremely stressful and very, very tough mentally. I try to keep contact with her in Odessa and try and help her as much as I can. She was way too old to move."

Svitolina says her grandmother has an unlikely saviour. "She is with her cat who she says is her biggest defender!" "My uncle and his family live not so far from her. They see each other when it is possible to leave the house and this is a big help. "Our friends are also helping by volunteering to go and see her." Despite not having lived in Ukraine for years, Svitolina said "it feels like home" and she used to visit three or four times a year. Hence her desire to do something to help her country like other leading Ukrainian sports personalities such as fellow tennis player Sergiy Stakhovsky and Sheriff Tiraspol manager Yuriy Vernyduh, who returned to join up. "A lot of my friends have come back and taken up weapons to defend the country," she said.



SPOTLIGHT

UEFA rubbish French minister's CL final fake tickets number

'There were around 2,600 tickets taken to the turnstiles which were fake'

AFP
Paris

A senior UEFA representative said yesterday he did not believe French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin's claims about the number of fake tickets in circulation during the chaotic scenes before last month's Champions League final between Liverpool and Real Madrid.

Following the game on May 28, Darmanin claimed that between 30,000 and 40,000 Liverpool supporters either came to Paris without tickets or with fake tickets. The minister claimed that was the cause of problems as police funnelled thousands of fans into narrow checkpoints and left them standing in underpasses around the stadium or at locked gates to the stadium, leading to the kick-off being delayed by more than 30 minutes.

Martin Kallen, general director of UEFA Events, who are in charge of the body's commercial events, told a hearing at the French Senate, which is investigating the incidents, the figure was much lower. "We know there were around 2,600 tickets taken to the turnstiles which were fake," Kallen said. "But a lot of tickets didn't get to the turnstiles... How many? We don't know, we can't really verify. We don't believe it's the number mentioned in France, which was more or less 30,000 to 40,000," he added.

Keller said other factors caused the problems at the Stade de France, in mayhem that saw the French police use tear gas at close range, even against children. "It wasn't only the paper tickets that created chaos in front of the gates," he said. "The reasons are numerous: a transport strike, poor reaction from stewards, police, there were delinquents and an extremely big flux of people in front of the stadium without a ticket or with fake tickets," he added.

A Liverpool fan told the Senate committee he had been caught up in "chaotic" scenes as French police sprayed



Liverpool ticket-holders waited in huge queues, with French police later using tear gas on crowds before the Champions League final in Paris on May 28. (AFP)

tear gas at supporters in wheelchairs. Ted Morris, chairman of the Liverpool Disabled Supporters Association, described how he and his wife had been pushed by stewards and sprayed with tear gas.

He said Liverpool supporters had lifted a wheelchair user over gates to get her to safety. He said: "She was lifted by Liverpool fans over the gates because the stewards refused to open the doors for her. Once outside, she was sprayed with tear gas on her way to the station."

"A major catastrophe has been avoided. No power was able to come to the aid

of the disabled supporters."

He said Liverpool fans were furious with the French interior minister's claims that the problems were caused not by inadequate policing, but because the club's supporters had tens of thousands of fake tickets. He said: "With my wife, we love France and Paris, but you, Mr Darmanin, you lied and I ask you to withdraw your accusation. And if you have the decency to do so, I hope you have the decency to resign."

Joe Blott, chairman of the Spirit of Shankly supporters' group, told the hear-

ing that with France set to host the Rugby World Cup and the 2024 Paris Olympics in the next two years, only a "full independent and transparent investigation" would restore people's confidence "in the ability of France to hold global sporting events".

UEFA has launched its own probe, overseen by a former Portuguese education and sports minister, which Kallen said would present its conclusions in September. "We thought the investigation would take a minimum two to three months," Kallen said.

FOCUS

FA chair backs Southgate despite poor England run

AFP
London

Gareth Southgate has been strongly backed by Football Association chair Debbie Hewitt following England's disappointing Nations League results, which included a 4-0 home defeat to Hungary. That embarrassing loss last week even sparked a debate over whether the England boss should be sacked ahead of the World Cup in Qatar, which starts in November.

But Hewitt hailed Southgate's role in transforming the team's fortunes on the pitch and instilling a healthy culture off it. The 51-year-old last year took England to the final of Euro 2020, three years after reaching the semi-finals of the World Cup in Russia.

"My personal opinion on Gareth is that he is, by the facts on the pitch, the most successful England manager we've had for 55 years," said Hewitt, who took over as FA chair in January.

"The bit people don't see as much is the Gareth at camp and the culture he's created. Certainly prior to Gareth being the manager of England, there was not the pride of wearing the England shirt. There were the club rivalries we'd read about. The players not getting on. He's changed that beyond recognition and I've seen that first hand."

Hewitt praised Southgate's willingness to take responsibility for setbacks. "It's refreshing



working with somebody like that because that openness to learn is quite remarkable and quite unusual in any sphere," she said.

Hewitt added that any debate over the timing of the decision to award Southgate a new contract prior to the World Cup was a "red herring". He signed a new deal in November which keeps him in post until the end of 2024.

"I don't think we would be discussing (the contract) had we not had the recent series of games," said Hewitt.

"Clearly we did that (agreed the new deal) with proper discussion and thought. The fact that there's been a stumble does not make us automatically say 'should we have given him a contract?' It is a red herring. We have confidence in Gareth for all the reasons I described and I think that's the important thing. And it's particularly important going into the biggest tournament."

ANNOUNCEMENT

Giggs resigns as Wales manager to avoid World Cup distraction

AFP
London

Ryan Giggs resigned from his role as manager of Wales on Monday as the former Manchester United great awaits trial on an accusation of domestic violence. Giggs has been on leave since November 2020 when he was arrested. The 48-year-old is accused of controlling and coercive behaviour against his former girlfriend Kate Greville between August 2017 and November 2020.

Giggs is also accused of assaulting Greville, causing her actual bodily harm, and common assault of her younger sister, Emma Greville, at his home in the Manchester area in November 2020. He has denied the allegations and pleaded not guilty to all charges.

His trial has been delayed until August in January to a courts backlog. Since then, his former assistant Rob Page, has led Wales to their first World Cup since 1958. Giggs' decision to step aside means Page will take charge of games against the USA, Iran and England in Qatar in November.

"After much consideration, I am standing down from my position as manager of the Wales men's national team with immediate effect," Giggs said in a statement. "It has been an honour and a privilege to manage my country, but it is only right that the Wales FA, the coaching staff and the players prepare for the tournament with certainty, clarification and without speculation around the position of their head coach."

Giggs won 13 Premier League titles and two Champions Leagues among 25 major hon-



ours during a 24-year career with United at club level. He began his coaching career at Old Trafford, taking temporary charge at the end of the 2013/14 season after David Moyes was sacked before working as an assistant to Louis van Gaal for two years.

Giggs was appointed Wales boss in January 2018 and helped them secure qualification for Euro 2020. And he said he hopes to return to management in the future. "I do not want the country's preparations for the World Cup to be affected, destabilised or jeopardised in any way by the continued interest around this case," he added.

"It is my intention to resume my managerial career at a later date and I look forward to watching our national team alongside you in the stands."

In a statement, the Football Association of Wales (FAW) said: "The FAW places on record its gratitude to Ryan Giggs for his tenure as manager of the Cymru Men's National Team and appreciates the decision he has taken, which is in the best interests of Welsh football. "The full focus of the FAW and the Cymru Men's National Team is on the FIFA World Cup in Qatar later this year."

PSG DENY ZIDANE TALKS, HOPE FOR GALTIER AGREEMENT

Paris: Paris Saint-Germain president Nasser al-Khelaifi insisted he "never spoke" with Zinedine Zidane about becoming coach in an interview published by French daily *Le Parisien* yesterday, saying the club had "chosen another option". "I never spoke with him, neither directly, nor indirectly," said al-Khelaifi, without ruling out that others in Qatar had approached the former France star. "When I say 'we', it's PSG. Me, I am the president of PSG and I never spoke with him."

The Qatari official said the club was keen to head in a different direction. "We chose a coach who will be the best for what we want to put in place," said al-Khelaifi as he confirmed talks with Nice boss Christophe Galtier. "I hope we'll quickly find an agreement but I respect Nice and the president (Jean-Pierre) Rive, everyone stands up for their own interests."

MANE POSES IN BAYERN SHIRT DURING MUNICH MEDICAL CHECK
Sadio Mane signed autographs wearing a Bayern Munich shirt yesterday after flying to Germany for a medical check before the Liverpool forward completes a move to the Bundesliga champions. A footage showed the 30-year-old touching down at Munich airport before being taken to a hospital in the city centre for a medical exam by Bayern's team doctor. During a break in the medical test, Mane appeared in a red Bayern training shirt and signed autographs for waiting fans. According to media reports, Mane's

transfer will cost Bayern around 41mn euros. "I am happy he has landed," Thomas Mueller said while attending a golf tournament in Munich.

Bayern's forward joked that he soon hopes to see Mane hit "lots of birdies" on the city's courses. Mane is expected to sign a three-year contract and is set to hold his first Bayern press conference today. Mane would be a replacement for wantaway striker Robert Lewandowski, who has been linked to a Barcelona transfer, or winger Serge Gnabry, who is stalling over a contract extension.

AUSTRALIA MULLING BID TO HOST 2023 ASIAN CUP

Australia is weighing up a bid to host the 2023 Asian Cup following China's decision to relinquish its rights to the tournament. Football Australia said. China was to host the tournament in June and July next year but the country's resolve to maintain a zero-Covid policy has resulted in the 24-team event being moved. The Asian Football Confederation invited bids for 2023 last month, saying interested parties must confirm by June 30.

"We are having discussions with the AFC and government in parallel as we determine the process and our interest," a Football Australia spokesperson said. The Australian government declined to comment on whether it supported a bid. "The decision to bid ... sits with Football Australia, as the relevant national sporting organisation," federal sports minister Anika Wells said in a statement.

South Korea confirmed on Monday that it will bid for 2023, while Japan said last month that it had been informally approached about making a bid.

Australia already has a busy 2023 planned as co-hosts of the Women's World Cup with New Zealand, which starts on July 20. Australia hosted and won the Asian Cup in January 2015, with former coach Ange Postecoglou leading the Socceroos to their first title in the continental showpiece.

The country's interest may hinge upon the AFC's willingness to shift the tournament away from the mid-year slot planned for China, given the potential clash with the Women's World Cup and the high demand for stadia from rival sports during Australia's winter.

LYON PRESIDENT AULAS SAYS DEAL AGREED FOR US TAKEOVER

Lyon president Jean-Michel Aulas said a deal was in place for US businessman John Textor to complete a takeover of the seven-time French champions. Eagle Football Holdings, a sports investment vehicle controlled by Crystal Palace shareholder Textor, is set to acquire a majority stake in the Ligue 1 club.

"We agreed, we shook hands overnight via video and at 3 am Monday everything was signed," said Aulas, adding that a board of directors had approved the deal. The agreement will see Textor buy out minority shareholders Pathe and IDG Capital - who hold 19.36% and 19.85% stakes respectively - and a gradual sale

of Holnest, the family holding company of Aulas, which holds 27.72% of the capital. Aulas said he would continue as club president for "at least three years".

NAPOLI PROBED OVER SUSPECTED OSIMHEN TRANSFER FRAUD

Napoli are being investigated for potential false accounting in the transfer deal which brought Nigeria's Victor Osimhen to the Serie A club, prosecutors confirmed. Prosecutors in Naples said in a statement that Italian finance police searched Napoli's Castel Volturno and Rome offices to collect documents regarding Osimhen's 70mn euros move from Lille in 2020.

They added that the searches come following requests from both Italian and French judicial authorities, with Lille having been also the subject of a search in last month. Italian media report that club owner Aurelio de Laurentiis was also under investigation. Osimhen's transfer was one of dozens of suspicious deals looks by Italian Football Federation (FIGC) investigators in a probe into allegedly inflated transfer values designed to artificially boost clubs' balance sheets. The deal stood out as it involved four players valued at just over 20mn euros moving to Lille as part of the deal. Three of them never played for the French club and are now in Italy's lower divisions. One of the latter trio, Luigi Liguori, said in December that he "never went to Lille" - not even to sign the contract - after being sold for 4mn euros.

PREMIER LEAGUE



Arsenal sign midfielder Fabio Vieira from Porto for 40mn euros

AFP
London

Arsenal completed the signing of highly-rated Porto midfielder **Fabio Vieira** in a 40mn euro (\$42mn) deal yesterday. The 22-year-old has emerged as one of Europe's most gifted young stars after coming through the Portuguese club's youth system.

He played a key role in Porto's do-

mestic double last season, scoring seven goals and providing 16 assists in all competitions.

Vieira on joining Arsenal said: "I'm thrilled, of course. This is an important step forward in my career. Arsenal is a huge & historic club, so I'm delighted to be here at my new home."

Praising Arsenal's third signing of the transfer window, Gunners manager Mikel Arteta said: "I am very excited that we have identified and signed such a special talent. Fabio is a very creative

player that will bring high quality and versatility to our attacking play."

Porto said last week that Vieira, who was voted player of the tournament at last year's Under-21 European Championship, would move to London after both clubs agreed a deal in principle. The Portuguese champions said the Gunners would pay an initial 35mn euros for the midfielder, with the rest in potential add-ons.

Arsenal did not specify the length of the contract but Porto's statement

said he would sign a five-year contract. Arteta is looking to add creativity to his side after Arsenal narrowly missed out on a return to the Champions League last season.

"Fabio is a player with special qualities who is comfortable with the ball in the final third of the pitch," added Arsenal technical director Edu.

"We are all looking forward to working with him and enjoying his future contribution to Arsenal. We will now continue to work hard and are looking

forward to finishing this transfer window as strongly possible."

Arsenal, who finished fifth in the Premier League last season, have already secured the signing of 19-year-old Brazilian forward Marquinhos from Sao Paulo and American goalkeeper Matt Turner.

Manchester City forward Gabriel Jesus, Leeds winger Raphinha and Leicester midfielder Youri Tielemans have also been linked with a move to the Emirates.