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England to stick with 'Bazball' approach



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Mourinho targets 6th European title as Sevilla seek to stay perfect



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# GULF TIMES SPORT



BASKETBALL

Heat rout Celtics to book NBA Finals showdown with Denver

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## AMIR CUP BASKETBALL: AL AHLI, AL SHAMAL REGISTER VICTORIES



Al Ahli and Al Shamal registered victories in their respective Group 1 matches as the Amir Cup basketball tournament kicked off at Al Gharafa Sports Club yesterday. Ahli outclassed Gharafa 78-60 in the opening match while Shamal prevailed over Khor 95-86. Group 2 teams will be seen in action today with favourites Al Rayyan taking on Al Wakrah before Qatar SC meet Al Arabi in the second match.

TENNIS / FRENCH OPEN

# Wild shock for Medvedev, Swiatek off to a flying start

Djokovic accused of fanning political flames, Andreeva breaks new ground, Ruud dazzles before Rune passes early test

Reuters  
Paris

Daniil Medvedev became the highest-ranked player to exit the French Open after losing a marathon encounter against Brazilian qualifier Thiago Seyboth Wild on a windy Tuesday, while Novak Djokovic found himself at the centre of a political storm.

Iga Swiatek gave herself an early birthday gift a day before turning 22 by dismissing Cristina Bucsa 6-4 6-0 as world number seven Ons Jabeur beat Lucia Bronzetti 6-4 6-1 and 16-year-old Mirra Andreeva earned her first Grand Slam main draw win.

World number two Medvedev emerged as a surprise contender for the Paris title following his Rome triumph but the Russian blew his chance in gusty conditions on Court Philippe Chatrier as Wild sealed a 7-6(5) 6-7(6) 2-6 6-3 6-4 victory. "I watched Daniil play since I was junior and beating him on such a court is a dream come true," world number 172 Wild said after the gruelling clash that lasted more than four hours. Medvedev later said he had no regrets about his claycourt season ending prematurely. "Today because of the wind and the dry court, I had my mouth full of clay since probably the third game and I don't like it," Medvedev said. "I don't know if people like to eat clay, to have clay in their bags, their shoes, white socks, you can throw them to the garbage after the clay season. Maybe some people like it. I don't." Kosovo's tennis federation said Djokovic risked aggravating



Brazil's Thiago Seyboth Wild bites his racket during his match against Russia's Daniil Medvedev on day three of French Open in Paris yesterday. Wild won 7-6(5), 6-7(6), 2-6, 6-3, 6-4. (AFP)

an already tense situation after the world number three wrote on a camera lens that Kosovo was "the heart of Serbia" following his first-round win a day earlier. Some 30 Nato peacekeeping soldiers were injured on Monday in clashes with Serbian protesters in the northern Kosovo town of Zvecan, where Djokovic's father grew up. "The comments made by Djokovic at the end of his match against Aleksandar Kovacevic, his statements at the post-match conference and his Instagram post are regrettable," Kosovo tennis federation chief Jeton Hadergjonaj said. "Despite a general message against violence, the statement 'Kosovo is the heart of Serbia' and further statements after the match made by such a public figure... directly result in raising

the level of tension between the two states, Serbia and Kosovo." The French Tennis Federation, which organises the Roland Garros tournament, said in a statement: "The same rules apply to all four Grand Slams. The tournament referee and Grand Slam Supervisors ensure that these rules are complied with. "Messages are passed on to the teams of any players concerned by such matters." A source with knowledge of the matter told Reuters that the organisers did not see 22-times major champion Djokovic's action as "detrimental to the best interests of the tournament", as per the Grand Slam rulebook. Last year's runner-up Casper Ruud advanced to the next round by thumping Swedish qualifier Elias Ymer 6-4 6-3 6-2 and he

was joined by sixth seed Holger Rune who dug deep to get past Christopher Eubanks 6-4 3-6 7-6(2) 6-2. Alexander Zverev exited Roland Garros in agony last year after rolling his ankle during his semi-final against Rafa Nadal but the German celebrated a winning return by beating Lloyd Harris 7-6(6) 7-6(0) 6-1.

### TEENAGE SENSATION

Andreeva announced herself to the world when she stunned 2021 US Open runner-up Leylah Fernandez 6-3 6-4 in Madrid last month and also defeated Beatriz Haddad Maia and Magda Linette before falling to eventual champion Aryna Sabalenka. The Russian qualifier broke new ground at the majors with a 6-2 6-1 win over former



Poland's Iga Swiatek serves to Spain's Cristina Bucsa during their French Open match yesterday. (AFP)

world number 18 Alison Riske-Amritraj. "Last year I was here as a junior and couldn't imagine I can be here playing the women's tournament, being in a major passing qualification," said Andreeva, who meets Diane Parry after the French wild card beat Rome runner-up Anhelina Kalinina 6-2 6-3. "I'm pretty excited about it," Andreeva, who also hoped to practice with Jabeur in Paris said. "I just try to enjoy every moment here." Andreeva said yesterday that a good luck message from Andy Murray "maybe" helped her win on her French Open debut. Murray is sitting out Roland Garros to prepare for the grass-court season, but he did wish Andreeva the best for her campaign. "After he won a Chal-

lenger, I texted him. I said, 'Congratulations,' said Andreeva. "He actually answered me, so I was really happy about it. He said, 'Thank you, and good luck in Roland Garros! Maybe that's why I'm playing that good now.'" She continued her rapid rise since losing in the Roland Garros girls' singles quarter-finals 12 months ago with an impressive dismantling of experienced American Riske-Amritraj. "Last year I was here as a junior, and I think I couldn't even imagine that I can be playing women's tournament here and being in a major, passing qualification," said Andreeva. Brenda Fruhvirtova, another 16-year-old seeking a statement win, crashed out following a 6-4 6-2 defeat by Elena Rybakina as the Wimbledon champion continued her quest for a second

Grand Slam title. "Didn't start that well, took me a while to figure out how to play this... But I'm very happy," said Rybakina. She will face another Czech teen, Linda Noskova, in the next round. American sixth seed Coco Gauff also shook off a slow start to seal a 3-6 6-1 6-2 victory over Spain's Rebeka Masarova. "Rebeka played a great match but I'm pleased I managed to turn it around," said Gauff. "I know that I'm confident on the surface and these conditions." Gauff, who lost to Iga Swiatek in last year's final, was broken early in the match and then saw eight break points come and go as Masarova held on to take the first set. But the 19-year-old raced through the second and then wasted little time in wrapping up the match as she broke serve three times in the decider.

SPOTLIGHT

# Dhoni hailed as one of a kind after thrilling IPL win

AFP  
Ahmedabad

**M**S Dhoni was hailed as a superhero yesterday after the 41-year-old's tactical acumen, cool demeanour and a crucial stumping helped Chennai Super Kings win a record-equalling fifth IPL title.

Chennai edged out 2022 champions Gujarat Titans by five wickets in a last-ball thriller that started on Monday and ended past 1:30am Tuesday. Fans of Dhoni and his team celebrated on the streets all night.

The final in Ahmedabad was played on the reserve day after a washout on Sunday and, after more wet weather, Chennai chased down a rain-revised target of 171 in 15 overs. Ravindra Jadeja scored 10 runs off the final two balls in front of 80,000 fans at the world's largest cricket stadium. Former India skipper Dhoni, who looks set to play on despite earlier suggestions that this might be his last IPL, he suggested after the final that he will return for one more crack in 2024.

"The way (fans have) shown their love and affection, I think that's something I need to do for them," he said. Rain halted play on Monday as a brief but torrential downpour left one of the side pitches soaked. Ground staff needed over two hours to get the game restarted after midnight. Fans kept patient for the second straight day, with chants of "Dhoni, Dhoni" reverberating through the night air, before Jadeja brought the house down with a six and four to seal victory. Videos of "Captain Cool" during the nerve-jangling final moments showed him somehow keeping calm – outwardly at least.

It appeared that he closed his eyes for the last ball when Jadeja needed a boundary to win. Dhoni then hugged Jadeja and lifted him off his feet.

have got a discussion," former Australia batsman and ex-IPL coach Tom Moody said on ESPNcricinfo. "But if you are talking about captaincy, there is no grand final." Former India batsman Sanjay Manjrekar agreed, saying: "This kind of leadership will rarely be seen."

Dhoni is India's most successful Test captain and has had a glittering career that included winning two World Cups. He retired from international duty in 2020 but continued with the IPL, albeit with a bad knee and some lacklustre batting performances this term. Having previously hinted this might be his last IPL, he suggested after the final that he will return for one more crack in 2024.

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Chennai Super Kings skipper MS Dhoni and teammates celebrate with trophy after winning IPL in Ahmedabad.

"As calm as he is and cool as he is, (still) it means a lot," Chennai coach Stephen Fleming told reporters. "The franchise, as we know, is very dear to his heart and he gives a lot to it. "This

stage of his career to win another IPL and lead a team like he has, I think it is great credit to him," Fleming said. Dhoni joined Chennai as captain from the inaugural edition and has previ-

ously led them to titles in 2010, 2011, 2018 and 2021. "He is an amazing human being really. The biggest strength he has got is this ability to take pressure off players, particularly young

players," Chennai batting coach Mike Hussey said.

"He is cool, calm and collected – like we all know – and tactically very smart."

COMMENT

# Confident England to stick with 'Bazball' approach for Ashes

'He is a world-class all-rounder and if he is able to bowl, fantastic. If not, we'll find a way'

Reuters  
London

**E**ngland head coach Brendon McCullum said the team will head into the Ashes series against Australia without fear of defeat and he sees no reason to rein in their high-risk, high-reward 'Bazball' approach that has proven so successful over the last year.

England were thrashed 4-0 in Australia in the previous edition of the Ashes but have won 10 of their last 12 Tests since McCullum took charge and Ben Stokes was appointed captain.

"Who knows if we are going to win this summer but we're going to go into it with the right attitude, the right environment, and the right team which believes it's got a chance," McCullum told British media on Monday.

"We're a team that knows how we want to play now, and we're not afraid to lose, which is quite a remarkable trait, and that's led by the skipper and some of the senior players as well."

"If we do play how we want to play, we give ourselves the best opportunity and we've got the talent to put world-class teams under pressure."

England are due to play Ireland in a one-off match beginning tomorrow before the first Ashes Test at Edgbaston



England's captain Ben Stokes (right) speaks with England's coach Brendon McCullum during a training session at Lord's cricket ground in London yesterday, ahead of their Test match against Ireland. (AFP)

on June 16. McCullum said fast bowlers James Anderson (groin) and Ollie Robinson (ankle) would miss the Ireland Test due to injury but will be fit for

the Ashes opener. All-rounder Stokes, who had an injury-hit stint with Chennai Super Kings in the Indian Premier League, could play a

role with the ball during the Ashes, he added.

"Stokesy is progressing well too. He looks really fit as well, looks in great order ... I think

he'll bowl at some stage throughout the summer, no doubt. "He is a world-class all-rounder and if he is able to bowl, fantastic. If not, we'll find a way"

FOCUS

## England's Woakes feared for Test future after knee injury

AFP  
London

**E**ngland's Chris Woakes said yesterday he feared he might never play Test cricket again following a long lay-off due to a knee injury.

The Warwickshire pace-bowling all-rounder was sidelined from first-class cricket for more than a year after knee surgery and has not played a Test since facing the West Indies in March 2022.

But the 34-year-old has been included in England's squad for their lone Test against Ireland at Lord's starting on Thursday and a strong showing at the 'Home of Cricket' could see Woakes feature in the upcoming home Ashes series. "Last summer was quite a tough summer for me personally, missing out on not just England cricket but all cricket," Woakes told reporters at Lord's yesterday.

And there was no disguising the relief Woakes, a veteran of 45 Tests, felt at getting a call from England coach Brendon McCullum telling him he was back in the red-ball squad.

"When Brendan did call me it felt, not like the first call-up, but it always means a lot and it's great to be back amongst it," he said. "Those sort of doubts (about playing again for England) do run through

your mind a little bit. That's part and parcel of professional sport, whether it be form, injury or whatever it is, there's always someone knocking on the door, younger players ready to come in."

England have won 10 out of 12 Tests since McCullum and captain Ben Stokes joined forces last year.

But although fellow pacer James Anderson and Ollie Robinson have been rested from the Ireland game in the hope they will be fully fit for next month's Ashes opener at Edgbaston, Woakes still has ambitions to face Australia this season. "Yes of course," he said. "Whenever you get an opportunity put the shirt on it's an opportunity to impress, contribute to team wins, and with a huge summer ahead you want to try and be a part of that."

Woakes, whose five Tests at Lord's have yielded an impressive batting average of 61.20 and 27 wickets at a miserly 11.33, added: "It's an opportunity if I get the nod on Thursday, then I'll obviously be doing my best to contribute to the team winning and putting in a personal performance. "You look across the board and we've got a very, very good pool of fast bowlers. There has been a couple of niggles around, obviously, and with a big summer ahead you would imagine we're going to need that big pool of fast bowlers at some point."



England's Chris Woakes attends a press conference at Lord's cricket ground in London yesterday. (AFP)

## ICC revenue model threatens growth of game, say associate members

**NEW DELHI:** Cricket's cash-starved associate member nations fear the proposed new international revenue distribution model, which heavily favours the game's superpowers, could potentially stall the growth of the game. The International Cricket Council (ICC) has proposed a new revenue sharing model for the 2024-27 cycle to be voted on at its July board meeting in Durban. According to figures leaked to Cricinfo, cricket's financial engine India would alone claim 38.5%, primarily in recognition of its contribution to the commercial revenue pot. The 12 full members of the ICC would collectively take 88.81% with the rest distributed among 94 associate members. The ICC has not commented on the figures, though general manager Wasim Khan said on Monday all members would get more money

under the proposed model than in the past. Pakistan have already made clear their opposition to the model in its current shape and resentment is rumbling among other, less developed, cricketing nations. Sumod Damodar, one of the three associate member representatives on the ICC Chief Executives' Committee, said the proposal would not meet the needs of associate members. "If what is being proposed and discussed is likely to be the outcome then, as an associate member representative, I would be (disappointed)," he told Reuters. "There are numerous practical reasons why it would be inadequate for associate members." Damodar, vice-chairman of Botswana's board, said associate members who have earned one-day international (ODI) status need more

money to sustain their high-performance programmes, while the others need cash to bridge the gap. Citing the rapid rise of Nepal in men's cricket and Thailand in the women's game, Damodar said more countries would step up if they were given the required financial support. Vanuatu Cricket Association Chief Executive Tim Cutler said the proposed model would only accentuate the inequality between cricket's haves and have-nots. "The new model is now even more heavily weighted towards the bigger cricketing nations, and there is a risk that the proposed changes will exacerbate this imbalance, putting the future of the game at further risk," Cutler told Reuters. "The sad reality is, cricket will not grow beyond its current corners of the world ... if the

allocation of the game's global funds aren't more equally allocated with a view to actually growing the game." With full members having 12 of the 17 total votes on the ICC board, Cutler said diverting funds away from themselves, or making independent decisions for the good of the game, would be like "turkeys voting for Christmas". The ICC did not respond to a request for comment when asked about the concerns of the associate members. Former ICC President Ehsan Mani said there was a lack of vision at the governing body in its approach to developing cricketing nations, despite the huge commercial potential of some of them. "One of the biggest risks for global cricket is its over-dependence on one country, India, for a major part of the revenues generated," the

former Pakistan Cricket Board chairman told Reuters. "Countries like the USA and the Middle East and, in longer term, China would bring enormous benefits to the ICC, its members and the global game. World cricket would be stronger and richer for it." For Mani, India grabbing the lion's share of ICC revenues "makes no sense" and he advocated equal shares for all full members. "World cricket needs a strong West Indies, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan," he added. "Cricket in Zimbabwe has suffered due to lack of funds as have Ireland and Afghanistan. Lack of investment in some of these countries will make the game unsustainable and world cricket will be poorer for it." (Reuters)

TENNIS

# Ukraine war has caused 'chaos' in sport: Swiatek

AFF  
Paris

**R**eigning French Open champion Iga Swiatek says the Ukraine war has caused "chaos" in the world of sport.

In an interview with French daily *Le Monde* yesterday, the Pole also hit out at the ruling bodies of tennis, the ATP and WTA, saying they had failed to provide leadership on the issue of Ukrainian players facing Russians on the court.

"There are indeed tensions among the players, sometimes the atmosphere in the locker room is quite heavy," the 21-year-old said.

"At the beginning of the conflict, there was a lack of leadership on the part of the tennis authorities, we were not brought



Poland's Iga Swiatek serves Spain's Cristina Bucsa during their singles match on day three of the Roland Garros Open at the Court Philippe Chatrier in Paris on Monday. (AFP)

together to explain how we were supposed to manage this complex situation and how to behave.

"Those who are in the worst position are the Ukrainian players and it would be good if we paid more attention to what they feel and what they endure."

Her fears were illustrated on Sunday when Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk was booed at the French Open for refusing to shake hands with Belarusian opponent Aryna Sabalenka. Kostyuk said the Paris crowd should "feel embarrassed" by their actions.

Swiatek, whose country neighbours Ukraine, was asked if she would support the participation of athletes from Russia and their ally Belarus at the Paris Olympics next year.

"It is not for us as athletes to make such a decision," she said. "There is currently a kind of chaos in sport and the most impor-

tant thing is not to make it worse, to share values that are the right ones and to be clear that we cannot tolerate the ongoing war."

Russia and Belarus were banned from international competition following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. In March this year, the International Olympic Committee recommended that Russian and Belarusian athletes return to international competition, without commenting on their possible presence at the Paris Games.

**'Old' Jabeur proud to inspire youngsters like Andreeva**

Ons Jabeur takes great pride in inspiring the next generation of women's players, even if the world number seven sometimes feels a little "old" when she is looked up to by a 16-year-old like Mirra Andreeva. Nicknamed the "Minister of Happiness", double

Grand Slam runner-up Jabeur is well loved by her peers for her graciousness and charm on and off court while her power and craftiness in matches have won her fans around the world.

Russian Andreeva is among Jabeur's many admirers and said after her first-round win over Alison Riske-Amritraj yesterday that she would like to someday practice with the 28-year-old.

"It makes me feel old, for one. Honestly, that was amazing, seeing that she talked about me and she was doing well," Jabeur told reporters. "I was really happy for her."

"Hopefully we can play each other. I can give her a signed picture. She can put it in her bedroom. I don't know. This is the first time that somebody says that. But it's special. I always try to inspire the new generation and am definitely proud of it. That

will motivate me, for sure, to do better and be a better player on and off the court."

Jabeur, who reached the Wimbledon and US Open finals last year, will continue her quest for a maiden major trophy at Roland Garros where she lost in the first round in 2022 and has never passed the fourth round.

The Tunisian looked in fine fettle as she kicked off her campaign this year with a 6-4 6-1 win over Lucia Bronzetti after an injury-hit start to the year where she had minor knee surgery before suffering a calf problem that forced her out of Madrid.

"I feel 100% fit," Jabeur said. "I need to have more matches under my belt to gain confidence, to up my game on the court."

"This match (against Bronzetti) will help me gain confidence and help me go further undoubtedly."

OLYMPICS

# Paris torch relay will involve 10,000 runners next year

'THE EIFFEL TOWER HAS NOT BEEN DECIDED AS THE LIGHTING LOCATION'

AFF  
Saint-Denis, France

**T**here will be 10,000 torchbearers to carry the Olympic flame as it passes through some 60 French departments ahead of the 2024 Games, Paris Olympic organisers announced yesterday.

After the flame is lit in the traditional ceremony in Olympia, Greece, it will arrive by sea in Marseille aboard the three-master Belem on May 8.

From there it will travel across France on its way to the Olympic opening ceremony in the capital on July 26.

There has been speculation that the Olympic flame will be placed on the Eiffel Tower, but the president of the organising committee, Tony Estanguet, told a press conference the final destination had not been decided.

"The Eiffel Tower has not been decided as the lighting location for the cauldron," he said.

A novelty this time is "collective relays", which could be groups of up to 24 people, with one carrying the torch.

There will be 3,000 collective and 7,000 individual torchbearers, including equal numbers of men and women aged 15 and over.

Each torchbearer will carry the flame for around 4 minutes over a distance of 200 metres.

A third of the torchbearers will be selected by the organising committee and the sports bodies, another third by relay sponsors Coca-Cola and French bank BPCE, another third by other Olympic partners, and the final 10 percent by the regions hosting the relay.

The International Olympic Committee forbids elected officials and religious figures carrying the flame.

Some French departments refused to take part, deeming the €180,000 (\$193,000) cost prohibitive.

The organisers said there would be "an itinerant bubble" of security around the flame provided by the French gendarmes, police and local security forces.



A computer-generated picture of how Paris would host activities for the Olympic Games 2024. (olympics.com)

The Paralympic torch relay, which will arrive in Paris on August 28 for the opening of the Paralympic Games, will involve 1,000 torchbearers, and will be shorter.

The record for most torch bearers is 20,000 ahead of the Beijing summer Games in 2008. That relay passed through 19 countries, where it was carried by more than 1,300 bearers, before reaching China. It covered a total of 85,000 miles on its 130-day journey.

For the last Summer Olympics in Japan in 2021, the Olympic torch relay was banned from public thoroughfares in many departments, including Tokyo, because of Covid. For the same reason the relay ahead of the 2022 Winter Games was reduced to three stages in Beijing.

At the London Olympics in 2013, 8,000 people relayed the flame.

**Peaty looking forward to Paris 2024 after mental health break**

Triple Olympic swimming champion Adam Peaty said he took a break from the sport to halt his "endless search" for rewards but the Briton hopes he will be in a better mindset at the Paris Games next year. Peaty said in March that he was tired and not enjoying swimming as much as before as he pulled out of the British championships in April to focus on his mental health.

The Briton, who also missed the 2022 world championships in Budapest after fracturing a bone in his foot, has previ-

ously spoken about periods of depression.

"I took a break because I was on this endless search of a gold medal or a world record and I looked into the future and I said, 'OK, if I do get that is my life fixed or any better?' No," Peaty told the *BBC* yesterday. "So take the time now to really think about who you are, what you want out of life and then get the gold medal. Hopefully when I get to the Olympics I will be in a very good mindset, very grateful and most importantly happy."

"As athletes our brains are wired a little bit differently, we're constantly chasing reward and if we can see that reward we will work extremely hard for that reward," added Peaty.

FOCUS

## Heat rout Celtics 103-84 to book NBA Finals showdown with Denver

AFF  
Boston

**J**immy Butler played a starring role as the Miami Heat advanced to the NBA Finals by routing Boston 103-84 on Monday, denying the Celtics a historic comeback after trailing the playoff series 3-0.

Butler had 28 points, seven rebounds and six assists while Caleb Martin added 26 points and 10 rebounds to spark Miami, which will visit Denver tomorrow to begin the best-of-seven championship final.

Miami recovered from a gut-punch of a game-six defeat, where they fell on a last-second tip-in, to win the Eastern Conference final 4-3, silencing a loud Boston crowd.

Taking full advantage of an injury to Boston star Jayson Tatum in the opening seconds and a cold-shooting Celtics start, the Heat avoided becoming the first team in 151 attempts to lose a playoff series after leading 3-0.

"We stayed together as a group," Butler said. "We talked about going to get a tough one on the road and we did just that."

"But we're not satisfied. We're happy. We're ecstatic. But we've got one more to get."

Miami coach Erik Spoelstra said he never doubted his resilient squad could win game seven.

"Sometimes you have to suffer for the things you really want," he said. "This group has shown fortitude when there are inevitable let-downs and failures, but had that perseverance to pick yourself up, that collective spirit to keep on forging ahead."

The Heat, seeking a fourth NBA title and first since 2013, last reached the NBA Finals in 2020, losing to the Los Angeles Lakers.

The Nuggets, into the NBA Finals for the first time, swept the Lakers in the Western Conference final.

It was a determined effort by a Miami squad that lost to Boston in seven games in last year's East finals. Miami also lacked any momentum after squandering their 3-0 edge to set up a winner-takes-all road game.

"When the ship gets rocky, just stay together and keep believing in one another," said Miami's Bam Adebayo, who had 12 points

and 10 rebounds. Spoelstra said last year's loss had weighed on the team. "They made us get better. We thought about it all season long," he said.

Butler said his teammates enabled him to sink key shots and shut down Boston comeback bids.

"They give me so much confidence to hoop at a high level," he said. "They're the reason we're here. I know how good a team we are and we made it happen."

Tatum, who finished with 14 points on 5-of-13 shooting, turned his left ankle landing awkwardly after a baseline jumper in the opening seconds. He grimaced often and took only one shot in the first 17 minutes.

"It swelled up," Tatum said. "I was like a shell of myself. It was tough to move. It was frustrating especially that it should happen on the first play."

Miami stretched the lead as high as 17 points in the second quarter but Boston pulled within 59-51 early in the third.

Caleb Martin sank a baseline jumper to put Miami ahead 76-66 entering the fourth. Martin sank a three-pointer to ignite a 7-0 Miami run to open the fourth quarter for an 83-66 edge.

"Not shooting the ball well had an effect on us," Tatum said. "And it kind of snowballed."

The Celtics went nearly four minutes without scoring and never again threatened, finishing a woeful 9-of-42 from three-point range.

"They gave it everything they had," Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla said. "That's the most important thing to take from this. We failed, but it's not because the guys didn't have a sense of togetherness and character."

Jaylen Brown led Boston with 19 points but had a career-high eight turnovers while Derrick White added 18 points.

"We failed. I failed," Brown said. "We let the whole city down."

An 18-6 Heat run to close the first quarter gave Miami a 22-15 lead with the Celtics matching their season low for first-quarter points. Boston went 0-for-10 from three-point range in the first quarter, missing the first 12 from beyond the arc overall, and made only 6-of-23 from the floor in the opening period.



Miami Heat forward Jimmy Butler (22) shoots against Boston Celtics guard Derrick White, guard Marcus Smart and centre Al Horford in the second quarter during game seven of the Eastern Conference Finals for the 2023 NBA play-offs at TD Garden. (USA TODAY Sports)

## WALLABIES SWEAT ON ALAALATOA'S CALF PROBLEM AS TEENAGER JORGENSEN DEALS WITH INJURY HEARTBREAK

**Sydney:** Wallabies prop Allan Alaalatoa could miss Australia's Rugby Championship opener in South Africa in early July with a calf problem, while teenager Max Jorgensen's World Cup dreams have been all but shattered by a knee injury.

Tighthead Alaalatoa, who captained Australia last year, will be the more worrying potential absence for new Wallabies coach Eddie Jones after he limped off the pitch in the ACT Brumbies' loss to the Waikato Chiefs at the weekend.

The 29-year-old will have scans on the injury today but has been ruled out of Friday's match against the Melbourne Rebels and looks to have played his last Super Rugby Pacific match of the season.

Taniela Tupou is still on the mend after



rupturing his Achilles tendon against Ireland last November so Jones is short of experienced tighthead props with Pone Fa'amausili, Sam Talakai and Harry Johnson-Holmes having five caps between them.

Teenager Jorgensen's breakout season at the New South Wales Waratahs, meanwhile, came to an end when the fleet-footed fullback twisted his knee at a ruck against the Canterbury Crusaders last Saturday. The Waratahs confirmed yesterday that the talented teenager had ruptured his medial collateral ligament and strained his anterior cruciate ligament, which will sideline him for up to three months.

Jorgensen was included in Jones's first

training squad in April but the former England coach is unlikely to take a chance on the 18-year-old for the World Cup without bleeding him at test level in the Rugby Championship. Jones had a chance to work with Quade Cooper and Samu Kerevi at the weekend when he coached the Barbarians invitation team to victory over a World XV. Flyhalf Cooper and inside centre Kerevi, both playing club rugby in Japan and both coming back from serious injuries, are likely to form a key combination for the Wallabies at the World Cup in France. "It's been useful," Jones said. "It's been like having a mini-training camp with those two there for the Wallabies. We thank the Barbarians for doing that."

## QFA president visits Qatar training camp



Qatar Football Association (QFA) President Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani visited the Qatar training camp at the Aspire Academy yesterday. Sheikh Hamad interacted with the players and head coach Carlos Queiroz, as the squad prepares for the Gold Cup, which will be played from June 16 to July 16 in the US and Canada. The three-day camp in Doha will conclude today, with the players flying to Vienna, Austria, today for the second phase of preparation. Queiroz, earlier this month had announced a 24-player squad for training camp, leaving out many of the senior stars who had appeared at the World Cup.

### FOCUS

## Callaghan named interim US coach

AFP  
Washington

**B**J Callaghan, an assistant coach for the United States national team the past four years, was elevated to interim head coach yesterday by US Soccer after Anthony Hudson departed. Matt Crocker, US Soccer's sporting director, appointed Callaghan to take charge of the American squad through title defenses in the upcoming Concacaf Gold Cup and Nations League tournaments.

Hudson, who had been serving on an interim basis, is leaving for an unspecified new opportunity. The search continues for a permanent head coach to replace Gregg Berhalter, whose contract expired at the end of last year.

Hudson, a US assistant coach since 2021, took over as interim coach in January, guiding the team to wins over Grenada and El Salvador in March to send the Americans into the Nations

League semi-finals.

Callaghan, 41, is the longest-serving member of the US men's national team technical staff. He joined as a strategy analyst in 2019 and became an assistant coach in 2021.

"Together, we have built a strong culture and a great understanding of how we want to play and we expect to continue to build on that progress," Callaghan said. "Our goal is clear: defend both of our CONCACAF titles." The US team will face Mexico at Las Vegas in the Nations League Final Four on June 15-18 with Canada and Panama meeting in the other semi-final.

### COVENTRY CONDEMN RACIST ABUSE OF DABO AFTER PENALTY MISS

Coventry have hit out at the online racist abuse directed towards Fankaty Dabo after his decisive penalty miss in the Championship play-off final against Luton at Wembley on Saturday. Luton won promotion to the Premier League by prevailing 6-5 in the shootout

after the sides were tied at 1-1 after 120 minutes.

Financial experts estimate promotion to world football's most watched league to be worth around £170 million, making 27-year-old defender Dabo's missed spot-kick one of the costliest errors in the game. Coventry said they would work with football authorities and the police to ban and prosecute anyone found to have sent racist messages to Dabo, who received a sympathetic hand from many Sky Blues fans at Wembley.

"The messages sent to Fankaty were disgusting and there is no place for any person who sent such vile abuse at any of our games, and social media is not a hiding place to make these comments," Coventry owner and executive chairman Doug King said.

Earlier, Coventry confirmed Dabo would leave the club when his contract expires, along with Julien Dacosta, Todd Kane, Sean Maguire, Michael Rose, Martyn Waghorn and Tyler Walker. Coventry manager Mark Robins thanked those leaving.

### EUROPA LEAGUE

# Mourinho targets 6th European title as Sevilla seek to stay perfect

'You stop when you lose motivation. My motivation grows up every day. I am better now'

AFP  
Budapest

**R**oma manager Jose Mourinho has never lost a European final while Sevilla are six from six in Europa League finals. Something has to give in Budapest today. The 60-year-old Portuguese coach has five major continental titles to his name - two Champions League wins, two Europa League trophies and last year's triumph in the inaugural Europa Conference League with the Italian club.

Mourinho announced himself on the big stage in 2003 when he led Porto to the UEFA Cup, the Europa League's precursor, and the following year to the Champions League.

Under Mourinho, Inter Milan became champions of Europe for the first time in 45 years in 2010. He celebrated his fourth continental trophy during his spell at Manchester United in 2017, winning the Europa League.

Twenty years on he is defying the naysayers who said his career was on the wane after a disappointing spell at Tottenham. If Roma lift the trophy in Hungary, Mourinho will pull clear of Giovanni Trapattoni, who also won five major European trophies in his coaching career.

The much-travelled Mourinho is in no doubt he is improving with age and experience. "Better coach, better person, same DNA," said the Portuguese. "The DNA is motivation, is happiness.



Roma's coach Jose Mourinho (centre) reacts as he inspects the pitch on the eve of the UEFA Europa League final against Sevilla at the Puskas Arena in Budapest, Hungary, yesterday. (AFP)

Desire for these big moments, and these are the feelings that I try to pass to the boys. I think you can be better and better with your experiences. I think your brain becomes sharper and the accumulation of knowledge is better with

the years. I think you stop when you lose motivation. My motivation grows up every day. I think I am better now."

Roma, who edged past Bayer Leverkusen in the semi-finals, are sixth in Serie A with one game to go but vic-

tory against their Spanish opponents this week would be a passport into the Champions League. Mourinho's future beyond this season is uncertain but he says his only focus is on today's match at the Puskas Arena.

To achieve his target, Mourinho must get past Sevilla, kings of Europe's second-tier competition.

Their tally of six wins is double that of Inter Milan, Liverpool, Juventus and Atletico Madrid. They are 11th in La Liga but have turned on the style in Europe, coming from 2-0 down at one stage in the first leg against Manchester United to see off the English giants before beating Juventus in the semis.

It is a remarkable end to the season for the club, who flirted with relegation for much of the campaign, sacking Julen Lopetegui and then Jorge Sampaoli, before Jose Luis Mendilibar steadied the ship. Veteran wing-back Jesus Navas is aiming to win the Europa League for the fourth time, just two months after Mendilibar took charge.

"We transform (on Europa League nights) and it's incredible how we come out in every match," said the former Manchester City player.

"It's a competition that has given us a lot, and the joy it provides us every time we take part in it drives us to go as far as possible. What Jose Luis has done with us has been fundamental. He has brought the best out of us, and when you look at the teams we have eliminated, it's something to be very proud of. Jose Luis deserves to stay with us for a long time as coach.

"He's a coach who always pushes us, and who has that work ethic to train hard and get the best out of us. His arrival has coincided with an incredible turnaround in our season."

### Illegal Premier League streaming gang jailed

**London:** Five men in the UK who illegally streamed English Premier League football matches to tens of thousands of people were jailed yesterday, the league announced.

Members of the gang received prison terms ranging from 3-11 years each after the Premier League brought what it said was "the world's largest-ever prosecution of an illegal streaming network".

The defendants, aged between 30 and 46, raked in more than £7m selling subscriptions to three illegal platforms streaming to over 50,000 customers and resellers. "The organisations offered illegal access to watch Premier League matches, hundreds of channels from around the world and tens of thousands of on-demand films and TV shows," the Premier League said.

The gang's "mastermind", Mark Gould, 36, was sentenced to 11 years in jail at Chesterfield Justice Centre, in central England. The remaining four received sentences ranging from three to more than five years. The private prosecution was supported by the trading standards team at Hammer-smith and Fulham Council in London and the intellectual property protection organisation FACT (the Federation Against Copyright Theft).

The gang, which relied on dozens of employees, profited by offering live access to Premier League games otherwise unavailable in the UK due to so-called "blackout" broadcasting rules. It accessed feeds from broadcasters in the UK, Qatar, the United States, Australia and Canada and streamed them a few seconds later. The operation developed mobile phone and online apps screening Premier League matches and other content. Premier League is the most lucrative football league in the world, with the UK broadcast rights alone worth about £5 billion for the 2022-2025 seasons.

## Al-Atya gears up for Rally Italia Sardegna



Qatar's Nasser bin Khalifa al-Atya and his Italian co-driver Giovanni Bernacchini tested their Ford Fiesta RRC ahead of this week's Rally Italia Sardegna where they will compete in the Masters Cup category. Two weeks ago, the duo finished fifth overall at the Rally of Portugal.

## Juve fined, avoid points deduction in false accounting trial

**Rome:** Juventus escaped an additional Serie A points deduction but agreed to pay a fine of more than 700,000 euros for lying about players foregoing wages during the Covid-19 pandemic after a plea bargain approved yesterday by the Italian Football Federation tribunal. The plea deal, which Juventus had requested, brings to an end a series of cases in Italy's sporting courts involving the Turin club. Last week they were given a 10-point deduction in Serie A after a revision of their initial 15-point penalty inflicted on the club over illicit transfer activity. Juventus have agreed not to appeal that penalty as part of yesterday's deal. The disciplinary tribunal of the Italian federation (FIGC) said in a published decision that it had fined the troubled club 718,240 euros, while seven of its management figures were ordered to pay fines ranging from 47,000 euros to 10,000 euros. Excluded from the plea

agreement, however, is former chairman Andrea Agnelli, who jointly requested along with prosecutors that his hearing be postponed to June 15, given what the tribunal called "advanced talks" on potential sanctions. The federation had been tasked with considering the deferred payment of certain players' wages by the club and its key figures, as part of a wide-ranging scandal involving false accounting and transfer trickery that has rocked Italian football. Newspaper *La Stampa*, which, like Juventus, is owned by the Agnelli family, wrote yesterday that the club had accepted the deal to avoid another points deduction, which could have pushed it further away from the European places in Serie A. Juventus are seventh in Serie A with one game of the season remaining, after the imposition of the 10-point deduction. If they hold that position on the final day, they will qualify for next season's Europa Confer-

ence League, but they still have a chance of finishing as high as fifth and going into the Europa League. Juve faces separate criminal proceedings in the affair, with 12 current and former key club figures including former chairman Agnelli potentially facing trial.

The plea bargain agreed yesterday relates to the Turin club having communicated that players were giving up salary payments during the pandemic in 2020, while privately assuring those players they would only miss out on a portion of what was publicly announced.

In doing so, Juve was able to artificially reduce losses in the club's annual balance sheets during the pandemic, when matches were cancelled and revenue plummeted. Agnelli, his ex-deputy chairman Pavel Nedved, and the rest of the club's board resigned in November following the probe by Italian authorities into the accounting irregularities. In its decision, the tribunal

said that the individual "F.P." would be fined 47,000 euros, and "P.N." 35,250 euros - referring to Juve's former sporting director Fabio Paratici, and Nedved, respectively. A 15-point penalty inflicted by the FIGC's appeals court in January against Juve for overstating capital gains on player sales was revoked in April by Italy's highest sporting court, the Sports Guarantee Board.

It was then revised to 10 points by the federation's appeals court on May 22. In January, the federation hit both Agnelli and ex-CEO Maurizio Arrivabene with two-year bans, handing sporting director Federico Cherubini a ban of 16 months. Former sporting director Paratici, who had left Juve for Tottenham Hotspur, was banned for two-and-a-half years, a decision that was extended worldwide by FIFA in March.

Juve icon Nedved, originally banned for eight months, was acquitted by the appeals court.