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SPORT



CRICKET

Pakistan not up to the mark in shock defeat to US, says Babar

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Al-Attiyah extends W2RC lead after finishing second in Argentina



Nasser Saleh al-Attiyah (inset) extended his lead at the FIA World Rally-Raid Championship (W2RC) after a second-place finish at the Desafio Ruta 40 in Argentina yesterday. The Qatari rally ace and his co-driver Edouard Boulanger finished 40 seconds behind Saudi's Yazeed al-Rajhi, who won the fifth and final stage yesterday. After the fourth round of the W2RC, just three drivers remain in contention for the title. Al-Attiyah with 156 points has a 25-point advantage over al-Rajhi. Lucas Moraes is further 53 points with 103. Al-Rajhi, who also won in Morocco, will be the main obstacle standing for al-Attiyah to clinch his third title.

TENNIS

Alcaraz outduels Sinner to reach French Open final

'It's one of the toughest matches I've played for sure'

AFP
Paris

Carlos Alcaraz beat incoming world number one Jannik Sinner 2-6, 6-3, 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 yesterday to reach the French Open final and continue his bid for a third Grand Slam title.

Alcaraz, 21, will play fourth seed Alexander Zverev or two-time Roland Garros runner-up Casper Ruud tomorrow after becoming the youngest man to reach Grand Slam finals on all three surfaces. "It's one of the toughest matches I've played for sure," said Alcaraz. "The toughest I've played in my short career have been against Jannik. I hope to play many, many more like this. You have to find the joy in suffering," the Spaniard added.

Alcaraz has won both of his two previous major finals – at Wimbledon last year and the 2022 US Open. Victory on Sunday would see him head to the Australian Open next January seeking a career Grand Slam. Both Alcaraz and Sinner arrived in Paris under an injury cloud, gradually finding their best level over the course of the tournament to set up a meeting billed as the match "everybody wants to see".

The ninth chapter of an enthralling rivalry destined to shape the future of the sport was the youngest Grand Slam semi-final pairing since Andy Murray beat Rafael Nadal at the 2008 US Open. It was their first Grand Slam meeting since a spectacular five-set quarter-final two years ago in New York, and while perhaps not as exhilarating this one was no less gripping.

Alcaraz, who was hampered badly by cramp in last year's semi-final loss to Novak Djokovic, had said that playing Sinner was like running a marathon, and it was the Spaniard doing much of the chasing early. Sinner pinned Alcaraz on the back foot straight away as he broke in the very first game, blending impenetrable defence with searing groundstrokes as he went on the attack.

After holding with ease the Australian Open champion belted a forehand winner for another break opportunity in the third game, sweeping 3-0 in front following an Alcaraz miscue. Alcaraz finally got on the board in the fifth game before retrieving a break, but he handed it right back and Sinner bagged the first set when the Spaniard dumped a drop-shot into the net.

Sinner began the second set in identical



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz celebrates after winning against Italy's Jannik Sinner at the French Open in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

fashion, earning another break after a loose Alcaraz service game and consolidating for a 2-0 edge on a picture-perfect day in Paris. Alcaraz belatedly spluttered into life though as Sinner struggled to maintain his sky-high standards from the opening set and presented his rival three break points with a double-fault.

A brilliant cross-court winner hauled Alcaraz back on serve, with the Spaniard soon accelerating 5-2 ahead following another break as Sinner sprayed his forehand wide. Sinner temporarily slowed the Alcaraz charge, ending his five-game winning stretch, but the third seed levelled up the match the next game.

The early onslaught from Sinner felt a distant memory as Alcaraz pounced to break for a 2-1 lead in the third set, flicking a sublime backhand passing shot beyond a powerless Sinner. Yet the momentum was quickly back with Sinner.

He ripped a blistering one-two combination

of forehands to get back on serve and then resisted four break points in a lengthy fifth game before holding for 3-2. Sinner received a massage from the physio for apparent cramp in his right forearm, but he brushed off any physical issue as he hammered a backhand return past Alcaraz to break again.

A tame Alcaraz forehand into the net handed Sinner the third set. A sense of calmness enveloped the fourth, with not a single break point on offer until a sizzling Alcaraz backhand brought about a set point. He didn't flinch and sent the match to a decider with a winner into the open court. Alcaraz's approach to grind Sinner down coupled with timely shotmaking allowed him to strike the critical blow in the second game of the fifth set. Sinner, while visibly flagging more than his re-energised rival, did not go down without a fight, but Alcaraz finally put him away after four hours of another seismic showdown.

FOOTBALL

Al-Battat dedicates historic qualification to Palestine people

By Sports Reporter
Doha

are important achievements for Palestine football, especially with the situation we are facing," said al-Battat.

The skipper admitted that nerves resulted in a less than satisfactory performance against Lebanon. "It is true that our performance was not up to the level we wanted, but the result is the most important thing, as we needed a draw to qualify. Having achieved qualification, we are determined to work harder as we realise that the final stage requires more effort as we will be facing teams with great history," he said.

Palestine play Australia in their concluding fixture on Tuesday but al-Battat said the squad will take some time to celebrate.

"I am happy because we made the Palestinian people happy with this qualification and we hope to continue making them proud. The entire squad is determined to continue giving our best."



Palestine's Musab al-Battat (left) vies for the ball with Lebanon's Nader Matar during the World Cup and Asian Cup qualifiers at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium in Doha on Thursday. (Reuters)

PREVIEW

Swiatek bids to extend French Open reign

AFP
Paris

Iga Swiatek goes into today's French Open final as the overwhelming favourite in her quest for a third successive Roland Garros title against surprise challenger Jasmine Paolini of Italy. Swiatek, the world number one from Poland, is attempting to become the fourth woman in the Open era to lift the Coupe Suzanne Lenglen four times – after Justine Henin, Chris Evert and Steffi Graf. Only two have won the French Open three years in a row – Henin (2005-07) and Monica Seles (1990-92) – but Swiatek's supremacy on the clay in Paris has attracted comparisons with Rafael Nadal, winner of 14 men's titles and who holds a 112-4 record at Roland Garros.

"We'll see in 14 years if the journey is similar. That's obviously really nice for me," said Swiatek. "I would never expect anybody to compare me to Rafa because for me he's above everybody, and he's a total legend. We'll see in couple of years, but I'm proud of myself that I'm playing consistently here and that I'm mentioned in the same sentence as Rafa. That's cool."

The 23-year-old Swiatek has won all four of her previous Grand Slam finals and will bid to extend that run against Paolini. Swiatek has won both her previous meetings with 12th seed Paolini, although the last of those was at the 2022 US Open and the Italian is enjoying by far the best year of her career.

Paolini, 28, will be appearing in her first Grand Slam final after defeating Russian 17-year-old sensation Mirra Andrejeva in the last four. That came after she knocked out former Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina, the only player to beat Swiatek on clay this season. It is an astonishing transformation for a player who had never gone beyond the second round of a major before the start of this year.

The world number 15 had won a total of four matches in 16 Grand Slam appearances before advancing to the fourth round of the Australian Open in January. Now she is one win away from an improbable title as she tries to emulate compatriot Francesca Schiavone, who won the 2010 French Open. Paolini's doubles partner Sara Errani lost the 2012 final to Maria Sharapova.

Paolini is the first Italian woman through to a Grand Slam final since Flavia Pennetta beat Roberta Vinci to win the 2015 US Open. "I was watching the other Italians make it in the finals, and also won Grand Slams, but (to) imagine that can be myself was tough," said Paolini. "Of course, I wished, but now it's something crazy for me. I'm really happy. Also surprised. I never dreamed to be, you know, number one, Grand Slam champion. Never dreamed so big. Never," she added.

The question before the tournament was whether anyone could stop Swiatek, who arrived in Paris having won titles in Madrid and Rome. Former world number one Naomi Osaka, on her least successful surface, had match point against Swiatek in the second round but could not finish the job.

REVIEW

Pakistan not up to the mark, says Babar

Reuters/AFP
Dallas, Texas

Pakistan have a tendency to underestimate less established teams at major tournaments, captain Babar Azam said, adding that his side played well below their standard in a shocking defeat to the United States at the Twenty20 World Cup on Thursday.

The US beat Pakistan in a Super Over in Dallas to achieve one of the biggest upsets in Twenty20 World Cup history and secure their second win of the tournament.

This is not the first time that Pakistan have suffered a defeat to lower-ranked opposition in major tournaments, with the 2009 champions losing to Zimbabwe in the 2022 T20 World Cup and Afghanistan at last year's 50-overs World Cup.

"Whenever you come into any tournament, you always do the best preparation," Babar told reporters after the defeat.

"But you can say it's a kind of mindset, when you come up against a team like this, you relax a little. You take things a little lightly.

"If you don't execute your plan against any team, then whatever team it is, they will beat you. I believe that we are not up to the mark in executing. We are doing well in preparation, but in the match, we are not executing our plans as a team."

Babar also lamented his side's failure to take wickets in the first half of the US innings, with an early 68-run partnership between Mohank Patel and Andries Gous proving vital in the host nation's chase.

"We are not playing good in all three departments," Babar said.

"We are better than that in the bowling, we aren't taking wickets in the first six overs. In the middle overs, if your spinner is not taking wickets then pressure is on us.

"But I think the way they finished the game in the Super Over, credit to the US team."

Pakistan next face arch rivals India in a blockbuster game in New York tomorrow.

'Black day': Pakistan reels from USA T20 World Cup stunner
Cricket fans in Pakistan were hurt and angry yesterday after a stunning T20 World Cup loss to hosts the United States, describing it as a



Babar Azam (centre) with his teammates prior to the start of their T20 World Cup match against the USA on Thursday. (@TheRealPCB)

historic rock-bottom for their beloved national sport.

"I am distraught," said retired banker Raju Jameel, who was close to tears after staying up late to watch the match on big screens in a shopping district in Karachi.

"It's hurtful and shameful, and there must be a thorough investigation of this defeat.

"There can be no bigger shock for Pakistan cricket than this," said former international and now cricket analyst Sikander Bakht on Geo TV, the country's most popu-

lar private news channel. "It is like Pakistan beating America at basketball."

While cricket is a national obsession in Pakistan, it barely registers in the United States, leaving most Americans either bewildered or apathetic over their momentous victory.

Commentators resorted to base-ball metaphors to explain the magnitude of the Americans' achievement to domestic audiences.

But Pakistani fans had hunched over screens of all sizes late into

the night, expecting to celebrate an easy win.

Instead, yesterday was a "black day in Pakistan cricket", according to former batsman Basit Ali, who blamed the loss on poor squad selection by captain Babar Azam.

Poor selection of players
"He has been consistently selecting players who are close to him and that has put paid to Pakistan's chances," he told AFP.

"I think our cricket has not seen a worst day," added former Pakistan wicketkeeper and batsman Kamran Akmal.

In one of Islamabad's marketplaces, 38-year-old Mohamed Amjad Abbasi counted off the decades of Pakistan's international cricket experience compared to the fledgling USA side.

"Our Pakistan team has become weak," he told AFP. "I don't enjoy watching matches anymore."

"Their performance is disappointing, the way they play in the end is always humiliating for us."

Both teams made 159 in their standard 20 overs of the Group A match at Grand Prairie, near Dallas, Texas.

Then competition co-hosts the United States, batting first in a Su-

per Over, made an 18 that featured several wides and runs off panic-stricken overthrows.

Pakistan were unable to match them, and the 7,000-seat converted minor-league baseball park in the Dallas suburbs erupted with celebrations around 1:00am Pakistan time.

"This time it felt like our team was the new one, and USA was a world-class team," said 54-year-old government employee Dilshad Akhtar in Islamabad.

"It can't be that we can play this badly!"

So little was the interest in the game in the US that it was not broadcast on TV there. But photos of Pakistan's fumbling performance were plastered across yesterday's morning papers in the South Asian nation.

"Disastrous start as minnows US edge out Pakistan," read a headline in the English-language Dawn newspaper, considered the national paper of record.

"Babar Azam's men have been pinned to the wall at the very start of their campaign," it said, calling it a "humbling loss".

"US stun sloppy Pakistan," said The News International newspaper.

MATCH REPORT

Gutsy Canada edge past Ireland by 12 runs in New York

‘HOPEFULLY WE CAN GO FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH’

AFP
New York

Canada won their first match at any Twenty20 World Cup when they stunned Ireland by 12 runs in a Group A game in New York yesterday.

Defending a target of just 138, the non-Test nation bowled and fielded expertly to hold Ireland to 125-7 from their full 20 overs.

Ireland collapsed spectacularly to 59-6 and come the last five overs they still needed 64 more runs to win - a rate of more than 12 an over

George Dockrell (30 not out) and Mark Adair (34) reduced the target to 17 off the last six balls.

But Canada paceman Jeremy Gordon held his nerve superbly, conceding just three runs and dismissing Adair with the second ball of the 20th over when he held a skied caught and bowled chance.

The 37-year-old Guyana-born Gordon finished with fine figures of 2-16 from his maximum four overs.

Canada themselves had been struggling to 53-4 after losing the toss before a key stand of 75 in 10 overs between Barbados-born left-hander Nicholas Kirton (49) and Shreyas Movva (37) helped take them to a total of 137-7.

Victory meant Canada bounced back from an opening defeat by



Aaron Johnson of Canada celebrates the wicket of Curtis Campher of Ireland with teammates during the ICC T20 World Cup match at Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in New York yesterday. (AFP)

the USA. But this result was Ireland's second successive loss at this tournament following an eight-wicket reverse against India.

Kirton, the Player of the Match, said yesterday: "It's very good to get over the line. I just tried to get in, and tried to get the pace of the wicket. Played a bit up

and down, but it was a very good wicket to bat on - to be honest. The partnership with Movva was very important.

"Hopefully we can go from strength to strength. Our next focus is Pakistan! Better purchase on offer (on the pitch). We are just taking it one day at a time," Kirton added.

BRIEF SCORES
Canada 137-7, 20 overs (Nicholas Kirton 49, Shreyas Movva 37; Barry McCarthy 2-24, Craig Young 2-32) **v Ireland 125-7, 20 overs** (Mark Adair 34, George Dockrell 30 not out; Jeremy Gordon 2-16, Dillon Heyliger 2-18) **Toss:** Ireland **Result:** Canada won by 12 runs

COMMENT

Captain Williamson hails expanded WC after USA's Super Over win

Reuters
New York

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson hailed the T20 World Cup's expansion to 20 nations after co-hosts United States beat Pakistan on Thursday in one of the biggest upsets in the tournament's history.

The World Cup, also co-hosted by the West Indies, has an extra four teams, giving fledgling cricket nations more big-tournament experience while also raising concerns their presence could mean more one-sided results.

Williamson, who made his T20 World Cup debut in 2012 when Sri Lanka hosted 12 teams, said the bigger field was a "fantastic thing".

"That sort of exposure is only beneficial for all teams," he told reporters on a video call from Guyana.

"When you come to tournament-time anything can happen which is the beauty of the sport. "But it's ultimately great for the growth (of cricket)."

The US, who were guaranteed entry as co-hosts, pulled off a Super Over win against Pakistan in Dallas after beating fellow tournament debutants Canada.

The undefeated Americans are now top of Group A before playing heavyweights India next week. The top two in the group advance to the Super 8 phase.

Williamson said his team had



watched the Pakistan upset from their base in the Caribbean. "That was an amazing game of cricket," he added.

"In these tournaments every team has really talented players, whether they've had experience against test-playing nations or not.

"In some ways, it's (how you play) on the day."

New Zealand, bidding for their maiden World Cup title, kick off against Afghanistan in Guyana on Friday, having waited long to get into the action.

"We're one of the last teams to start so I know we're all looking forward to starting off the tournament after spending maybe 10 days or so practising," Williamson said.

SPOTLIGHT

Sri Lanka complain to ICC over 'different treatment' at World Cup

AFP
Colombo

Sri Lanka said yesterday they have complained to the International Cricket Council (ICC) over their T20 World Cup team's treatment and conditions in co-host the United States.

The sports minister Harin Fernando alleged other teams had it better and said Sri Lanka had lodged a formal protest after the squad was held up by a seven-hour flight delay at a Florida airport.

He said Sri Lanka had also been given accommodation more than 90 minutes' drive from the practice stadium when they reached New York. He said India's team had been put up much closer.

Sri Lanka lost to South Africa by six wickets in their opening match on Monday in New York.

"Sri Lanka Cricket has complained to the ICC," Fernando told parliament.

"Different countries are being treated differently. We have called for an explanation from the or-

ganisers of the tournament." Sri Lanka's sports ministry has dispatched an officer to the United States to look into the welfare of the team, Fernando added.

AFP has contacted the ICC for comment.

Opposition leader Sajith Premadasa said Sri Lanka's parliament was united in its upset over the supposed conditions.

"We stand against this injustice, we should not allow this," he said.

Angelo Mathews, a former skipper and current member of Sri Lanka's T20 squad, told local broadcaster Ada Derana TV the past few days had been "most challenging".

"Practice facilities are not good. Wickets are not good. Last four to five days have been very challenging for us," he said.

"We had to cancel practices because a flight was delayed. "We are not going to use this as an excuse, we are a team that has won despite obstacles. We want to put all this behind us and do well at the next match."

Their next game is against Bangladesh today.

FOCUS

Berrington anchors Scotland to win over Namibia

AFP
Bridgetown, Barbados

Captain Richie Berrington upstaged his Namibian counterpart in leading Scotland to a table-topping, five-wicket victory in Group B at the T20 World Cup at Kensington Oval in Barbados.

Thwarted by the weather in their opening fixture against England two days earlier at the same venue, Berrington's composed unbeaten 47 off 36 balls (two fours, three sixes) and the timely support of the aggressive Michael Leask (35 off 17 balls, 4 sixes) paced the Scots to a winning total of 157 for five with nine balls to spare.

Their combined effort in a fifth-wicket partnership of 74 rendered Gerhard Erasmus' all-round contribution in vain after the Namibian captain had topscored with 52 out of a total of 155 for nine, followed by figures of two for 29 off four overs as Scotland wobbled at 73 for four in the 11th over.

This was Scotland's first-ever victory over Namibia in a T20 International and lifts them to



Scotland's Chris Greaves (left) and Richie Berrington celebrate winning the Twenty20 World Cup match against Namibia at Kensington Oval, in Bridgetown, Barbados, yesterday. (AFP)

the head of the standings on three points from two games in a group that also includes the defending champions England and 2021 winners Australia. "I don't think we'll get over this for a while. It's a hell of a feeling," said an elated Leask

after receiving the 'Player of the Match' award. "Given the last time we played them they had us three down in the first over, this feels special." Leask's task in providing the necessary spark to the Scotland scoring rate is something he has become used to. "My role is simple: hit the ball hard, try and find gaps, and if it's in the slot, try and hit it out of the ground," he said.

For Erasmus it was a particularly bitter pill to swallow given his overall contribution. He may have forgotten about the inclusion of JP Kotze at the top of the order for this match during the toss, but the captain was well aware of his role when coming to the crease in the fourth over with his side in trouble at 19 for two following the decision to bat first.

BRIEF SCORES
Namibia 155-9 off 20 overs (Gerhard Erasmus 52, Zane Green 28; Brad Wheal 3-33, Brad Currie 2-16) **vs Scotland 157-5 off 18.3 overs** (Richie Berrington 47 not out, Michael Leask 35; Gerhard Erasmus 2-29, Bernard Scholtz 1-20) **Toss:** Namibia **Result:** Scotland won by 5 wickets

ATHLETICS

Croatia's Elkasevic sails into discus final



Croatia's Sandra Elkasevic in action during the women's discus throw qualification round at the European Athletics Championships in Stadio Olimpico, Rome, Italy, yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP
Rome

Croatian discus legend Sandra Elkasevic got her bid for a record seventh European title off to a smooth start by cruising through qualifiers at Rome's Stadio Olimpico yesterday.

The 33-year-old, twice Olympic gold medallist and a two-time former world champion, is unbeaten on the European stage since Barcelona in 2010, winning successive continental editions in Zurich, Helsinki, Amsterdam, Berlin and Munich over the past 12 years.

Better known by her maiden name Perkovic, Elkasevic - one of 14 female title defenders on show in Rome - threw 65.62 metres with her second throw to guarantee her

place in today's final, scheduled to start at 1937 GMT (10:37 QST).

The opening session of the six-day European championships, in bright and hot conditions, also featured the opening two events of the women's heptathlon.

Britain's world champion Katarina Johnson-Thompson is seeking to win her first European Championships title after winning silver in Berlin in 2018.

It will be Johnson-Thompson's first heptathlon of the season, having competed in a number of individual events, and she described the seven-discipline event over two days akin to "spinning plates" such is the juggling of mental and physical loads.

She opened with a season's best 13.66 seconds in the 100m hurdles, with Belgian rival Nafi Thiam clocking 13.74sec.

Thiam's teammate Noor Vidts set a personal best of 13.16, just two-hundredths off the fastest time of the day by Switzerland's Annika Kalin.

Thiam, a two-time Olympic champion as well as defending double European gold medallist and a two-time world title holder, then managed a best of 1.95m in the high jump to take control, with Johnson-Thompson bailing out at 1.83m.

The heptathletes compete in the shot put and 200m in yesterday's evening session before rounding off today with the long jump, javelin and 800m.

Greek Miltiadis Tentoglou made short work of qualifying in the men's long jump, the Olympic and world champion sailing out to 8.14 metres at the first time of asking to seal a spot in today's final.

Switzerland's Simon Ehammer notched up a world-leading 8.41m to ensure competition will be intense.

In qualification for the men's discus, Sweden's Daniel Stahl, like Miltiadis also a reigning world and Olympic champion, advanced with a best of 63.79m.

Heading the field, however, was Lithuania's recently-crowned world record holder Mykolas Alekna, with 67.50m.

Slovenia's Kristjan Ceh, who was 2022 world champion and won silver behind Stahl in Budapest last year, managed 65.64m as the top three promise a battle royale in the final in yesterday's evening session.

Other finals include the 20km race walk, shot put and 5,000m for women, as well as the 4x400m mixed relay.

FORMULA ONE

Norris is fastest in wet and wild Canada practice

Vicious storms rumble across Montreal drenching the island circuit



Lando Norris of Great Britain driving the McLaren MCL38 Mercedes on track during practice at the Grand Prix of Canada at Circuit Gilles Villeneuve in Montreal, Quebec, yesterday. (AFP)

Reuters
Montreal

McLaren's Lando Norris posted the fastest time of a wet and wild first practice for the Canada Grand Prix yesterday pushing the Ferraris of Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz down the time sheets.

After early morning storms Norris, who picked up his first career win earlier this season in Miami, took advantage of drying conditions to put down a best time of one minute and 24.435 seconds around the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve.

Norris's effort denied Ferrari a perfect start to the weekend with Sainz second best ahead of Monaco winner Leclerc.

Seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton, who claimed his first career win in Montreal, was fourth fastest for Mercedes ahead of Red Bull's championship leader Max Verstappen.

About an hour before practice a vicious storm rumbled across Montreal drenching the island circuit and pelting spectators with hailstones.

The session began under a yellow flag as marshals worked to remove standing water with mops and hoses as rain continued to fall.

After a 25-minute hold the pit lane was finally opened allowing cars out onto the newly resurfaced circuit with Hamilton first to post a time.

But just as the sun began to creep out and the circuit was drying, the session was red flagged when Sauber's Zhou Guanyu brushed

the wall scattering debris across the track. When action resumed drivers took advantage of quickly improving conditions going out on slicks as the practice finished under sunny skies.

Alpine's Australian reserve Jack Doohan took part in first practice stepping in for Esteban Ocon, who was told earlier this week that the Renault-owned outfit would not be renewing his contract for next season.

But Doohan, the son of five-times 500cc motorcycling world champion Mick and a possible replacement for the Frenchman, failed to post a time.

With the first session behind them, drivers and their teams will debrief in the paddock before returning to the track for second practice but current weather forecasts more rain to fall between now and then.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Tyson-Paul fight gets rescheduled for Nov 15 after medical delay



Boxers Mike Tyson and Jake Paul face off during a news conference in New York City, US, on May 13, 2024. (Reuters)

AFP
Los Angeles

Mike Tyson's return to the ring against YouTube sensation Jake Paul has been rescheduled for November 15 after being postponed from July following health issues of former heavyweight champion Tyson.

Promoters announced yesterday that the bout, which had been planned for July 20, will still be contested at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas - home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys.

Paul announced the new date in a posting on X, formerly Twitter, with the message: "New date, same place, same fate."

Tyson, who turns 58 on June 30, required medical treatment on a flight last month from Miami to Los Angeles after complaining of nausea and dizziness.

Organisers said Tyson suffered an "ulcer flare up" and doctors recommended reduced training for several weeks, mandating the postponement.

"Although we had to postpone the fight, I will resume training shortly," Tyson said.

"I'm thankful to the medical staff that treated me and to MVP, Netflix, and AT&T Stadium for working diligently to find the best reschedule date for all parties."

"While we have a new date, the result will be the same no matter when we fight. Jake Paul is getting knocked out."

The fight still will be televised by streaming service powerhouse Netflix.

The new fight date is on a Friday, which will allow time for the stadium to be reconfigured ahead of the Cowboys playing host to the Houston Texans in a Monday night NFL game on November 18.

Paul, 27, will face Tyson over eight two-minute rounds in a professional fight sanctioned by Texas boxing officials. Tyson's last prior pro fight was in 2005.

Other fighters, including former heavyweight champion Deontay Wilder, expressed concerns Tyson might be seriously hurt in the bout but Tyson last month said the decision for a ring return against Paul was a "no-brainer."

Tyson dominated the heavyweight division in the 1980s and 1990s, earning the tag as the "baddest man on the planet" in his prime.

German court drops Zverev assault case after settlement

Berlin: A German court yesterday dropped a case against Alexander Zverev over allegations he assaulted his ex-girlfriend, after a settlement was agreed hours before he was due to play in the semi-final of the French Open.

Zverev's former partner, Brenda Patea, "was no longer interested in pursuing the prosecution", said Inga Wahlen, the deputy spokeswoman for the Berlin criminal courts.

The plaintiff and the tennis star had decided "they would like to resolve this smouldering conflict peacefully, also in the interests of their child", she said.

The appeal hearing opened last week in Berlin but Zverev had been absent from the proceedings.

As part of the settlement announced yesterday, Zverev had agreed to pay €200,000 (\$217,000), with most of it going into state coffers and the remainder to a fund for charitable organisations, the court spokeswoman said.

The German had already been fined €450,000 (\$490,000) in October in the same case.

He was accused of "briefly" choking Patea "with both hands" in May 2020, according to the court.

The alleged incident took place



in the stairwell of her apartment building in the capital, the court said.

Patea is said to have suffered "difficulty breathing and significant pain" as a result of the assault.

Zverev rejected the accusations and lodged an appeal. After yesterday's settlement was announced, his lawyers stressed he was "still considered innocent".

The sportsman's lawyers had said the criminal complaint, filed over a year after the incident, was linked to a dispute over custody and maintenance payments in relation to the couple's daughter. Patea's lawyer, however, rejected suggestions the trial was just about money.

BOTTOMLINE

Paris hangs its Olympic rings on the Eiffel Tower

AFP
Paris

As the countdown to the Olympics passed the 50-day mark, Paris hoisted its rings on the Eiffel Tower overnight and showed them off yesterday morning.

Workers assembled the pre-fabricated steel rings and after dark on Thursday lifted the logo, weighing 30 tonnes and 29 metres long, into place between two legs of the tower just above its first level.

Pierre Engel, an engineer at ArcelorMittal, the steel company that manufactured the rings from recycled material, said tests and studies had been carried out for many months to ensure the success of the operation.

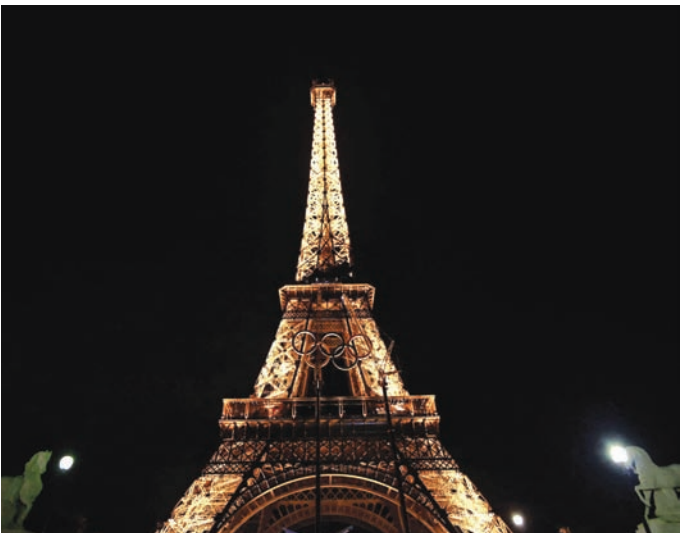
The rings, each nine metres in diameter, will be illuminated every night.

"It will be one of the images of the Games," predicted Thierry Reboul, Director of Events and Ceremonies at the Paris Organising Committee for the Olympic Games.

Only two other buildings in Paris have the five rings attached to their facades.

Earlier in the week, the rings were also hoisted at the Paris La Defense Arena, in suburban Nanterre, where the Olympic and Paralympic swimming events will be held.

On the other side of Paris, the Georges-Vallerey pool, a training venue for these Games, has long displayed the rings because it hosted the swimming at the 1924 Games.



The Olympic rings are being installed on the Eiffel Tower for the upcoming Paris 2024 Olympic Games, in Paris, yesterday. (AFP)

SPOTLIGHT

Portugal put faith in superstar Ronaldo in search of Euro glory

Forward is set to appear at a record sixth European tournament



Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo with teammates during a training session in Oeiras, Portugal, yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP
Paris

Roberto Martinez has given Cristiano Ronaldo his full backing since taking over as Portugal coach and he will be hoping that faith helps provide the nation a second European Championship title, while Georgia make their first major tournament appearance in Group F.

Ronaldo has taken his men's international records to 206 appearances and 128 goals since Martinez took charge. The 39-year-old is set to break more records in Germany this summer in his 11th major tournament, including appearing at a record sixth European Championship, as he bids to extend his all-time leading mark of 14 goals in the competition.

He finished as the second top goalscorer in Euro 2024 qualifying, allaying some fears that switching to the Saudi Pro League would hinder his efforts for Portugal.

Ronaldo was dropped from the starting line-up by previous boss Fernando Santos during the knock-out stage of the 2022 World Cup, as Portugal suffered a shock quarter-final defeat at the hands of Morocco.

But he has re-established himself as the team's talisman, despite Portugal also boasting the attacking talents of Bruno Fernandez, Bernardo Silva, Diogo Jota and Goncalo Ramos. "Cristiano is a unique player in the world, with the highest number of international caps," Martinez said early in his reign after being appointed coach following the Qatar World Cup, where he oversaw Belgium's disappoint-

ing group-stage exit.

"The experience he has for the dressing room is very important. All players have an important role. The younger ones due to their willingness to play and players like Cristiano Ronaldo, Rui Patricio and Bernardo Silva bring experience. It's important to have a complete dressing room."

In spite of his advancing years, Ronaldo will not be the oldest player in the squad. His former Real Madrid team-mate Pepe, 41 and now playing for Porto, has also been called up because of his "important role in the dressing room", said Martinez.

Ronaldo's Al Nassr teammate Otavio will be missing through injury, with Manchester City midfielder Matheus Nunes called up as his replacement. Portugal will be red-hot favourites to progress from Group F, but Ronaldo will be among those who know how tricky a seemingly easy pool can be, after the Portuguese scraped into the knock-out phase with group draws against Austria, Hungary and Iceland en route to the 2016 title.

Martinez's men kick off their campaign against the Czech Republic in Leipzig on June 18, before facing Turkey four days later in Dortmund and completing the group stage by taking on Georgia in Gelsenkirchen on June 26. Portugal are bidding to become only the third nation to lift the trophy twice in the space of three editions or fewer, after Spain in 2008 and 2012 and West Germany in 1972 and 1980. They suffered a disappointing 1-0 loss to Belgium in the 2020 last 16.

Georgia make their major tournament bow relying on star man Khvicha Kvaratskhelia,

against the backdrop of turmoil and political violence back home.

The only debutants at this year's event came through the play-offs with a penalty shoot-out triumph over former European champions Greece. The 24-team format gives smaller teams like Georgia hope of reaching the knockouts, with one win potentially enough to secure one of the best third-placed berths.

Kvaratskhelia was part of Napoli's miserable Serie A title defence this season, but remains Georgia's key man after scoring four goals in qualifying.

"Football for me is like my life. It's so simple to say but football is my life," he said in April.

Mass protests from pro-European opposition broke out in Georgia in April after the government, led by the Georgian Dream party, introduced a controversial "foreign influence" bill.

The Czechs will be favourites to progress alongside Portugal and have often impressed at previous Euros, including three years ago with a run to the quarter-finals which was ended by Denmark.

Patrik Schick will again be expected to provide the goals after finishing as joint-top scorer at Euro 2020 with Ronaldo, after enjoying a memorable season at Bayer Leverkusen as they won the Bundesliga-German Cup double. Turkey were widely tipped as potential dark horses for the title last time but slumped to a dreadful group-stage exit. Vincenzo Montella's team, led by Hakan Calhanoglu and hoping for a breakthrough performance from Real Madrid starlet Arda Guler, will be out to prove a point.

FOCUS

Khaka and Akanji in Switzerland squad for Euro 2024

AFP
Zurich

Khaka, Denis Zakaria, Steven Zuber.

BARÇA'S CUBARSI AMONG CUTS FOR FINAL SPAIN EURO 2024 SQUAD

Switzerland captain Granit Khaka and defender Manuel Akanji will headline the country's 26-man European Championship squad which was named by manager Murat Yakin yesterday, but striker Andi Zeqiri has missed out on a place. Having helped Bayer Leverkusen win their first Bundesliga title last season, 31-year-old Khaka will be instrumental to Switzerland's hopes when they kick off their Euro 2024 campaign against Hungary on June 15. Akanji, a Premier League champion with Manchester City, will lead the defence alongside Nico Elvedi, Ricardo Rodriguez, Fabian Schar, Leonidas Stergiou, Silvan Widmer and Cedric Zesiger.

Switzerland, who will also play Scotland and hosts Germany in Group A, have kept 24-year-old Genk player Zeqiri on standby. "Andi made the decision difficult for us. He has performed very well recently. The training days in pre-camp showed that there is a lot of competition in the offence, which is why other players have been given preference," Yakin said in a statement. "We had very good training sessions. The competition for the 26 places contributed to the high training intensity and kept the tension in the team high throughout the camp. I am very satisfied. With this good spirit, we now want to start the last European Championship test against Austria and then the journey to Stuttgart." As part of their Euro preparation, Switzerland will host Austria in a friendly match today.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Unai Simon (Athletic Bilbao), Alex Remiro (Real Sociedad), David Raya (Arsenal/ENG)

Defenders: Dani Carvajal (Real Madrid), Jesus Navas (Sevilla), Robin Le Normand (Real Sociedad), Dani Vivian (Athletic Bilbao), Nacho Fernandez (Real Madrid), Aymeric Laporte (Al Nassr/KSA), Alex Grimaldo (Bayer Leverkusen/GER), Marc Cucurella (Chelsea/ENG)

Midfielders: Rodri Hernandez (Manchester City/ENG), Martin Zubimendi, Mikel Merino (Real Sociedad), Fabian Ruiz (Paris Saint-Germain/FRA), Pedri, Fermin Lopez (both Barcelona), Alex Baena (Villarreal)

Forwards: Alvaro Morata (Atletico Madrid), Joselu (Real Madrid), Nico Williams (Athletic Bilbao), Dani Olmo (RB Leipzig/GER), Lamine Yamal, Ferran Torres (both Barcelona), Mikel Oyarzabal (Real Sociedad), Ayoze Perez (Real Betis)



Granit Khaka will be instrumental to Switzerland's hopes when they kick off their Euro 2024 campaign against Hungary on June 15

ROUND-UP

Porto name Bruno as new coach

Portuguese side Porto appointed **Vitor Bruno**, the former assistant to his predecessor Sergio Conceicao, as their new coach. Bruno, 41, has signed a two-year contract until 2026 with the club he has been with since 2017, the club said in a statement.

Conceicao left this week after seven seasons at the helm, steering Porto to 11 trophies including the Portuguese Cup last month with a 2-1 win over Sporting Lisbon and three league titles in 2018, 2020 and 2022.

Things soured in his last campaign with Porto finishing third in the league – 18 points behind champions Sporting Lisbon – but Bruno promised the fans that he would return the club to the pinnacle of Portuguese football.

"We'll be unbeatable in terms of character, ambition, passion for our work and embodying the spirit of FC Porto's members and fans," said Bruno in a press conference.

This is Bruno's first job as head coach having previously worked as an assistant in a number of clubs including top Portuguese sides Braga and Guimaraes, and French club Nantes. Conceicao had recently extended his contract but the arrival of former Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur manager An-



dre Villas-Boas as club president precipitated his departure.

VARDY SIGNS NEW ONE-YEAR DEAL WITH LEICESTER

Jamie Vardy has signed a new one-year contract at Leicester, recently promoted back to the Premier League, the club announced. The 37-year-old striker, who joined the Foxes in 2012, scored 20 goals in 37 appearances during their 2023/24 Championship-winning campaign.

Vardy, who has won the Premier League and FA Cup during his time at the King Power Stadium,

is third on the club's all-time goalscoring list, with 190 goals in 464 games. Leicester are searching for a new manager after Enzo Maresca, who guided the club to the Championship title in his first season in charge, left to join Chelsea earlier this week.

CHELSEA SIGN FULHAM DEFENDER ADARABIOYO

Chelsea have signed defender Tosin Adarabioyo from Premier League rivals Fulham on a free transfer. The 26-year-old former Manchester City trainee, who has agreed a four-year deal, will move on July 1 after the expiry of his contract at Craven Cottage.

Adarabioyo, who joined Fulham in 2020, is Chelsea's first signing since Enzo Maresca was announced as manager on a five-year deal earlier this week. The Italian replaced Mauricio Pochettino, who left by mutual consent following the end of the league season.

Adarabioyo's arrival follows the departure of veteran centre-back Thiago Silva, who has joined Brazilian club Fluminense. Chelsea have spent more than £1bn on signings since a consortium led by Todd Boehly and private equity firm Clearlake Capital bought the club in May 2022.

TREZEGUET STRIKES TWICE AS SALAH-LED EGYPT WIN WORLD CUP QUALIFIER

Johannesburg: A whirlwind start in which Mahmoud Trezeguet scored twice propelled Mohamed Salah-led Egypt to a 2-1 victory over Burkina Faso in a World Cup matchday three showdown in Cairo on Thursday.

Turkey-based Trezeguet scored with his head after three minutes and his left foot after seven minutes, and the win gave the Pharaohs a four-point lead over Guinea-Bissau in Group A. Liverpool star Salah set up the first goal on his return to the national team after suffering a hamstring injury during the group stage at the 2024 Africa Cup of Nations.

Lassina Traore reduced the deficit 11 minutes into the second half, but the Burkinabe could not avoid a first loss and slipped to third.

Guinea-Bissau were surprisingly held 0-0 at home by Ethiopia, and will now prepare to host Egypt on Monday. Egypt are among six countries boasting 100 percent records after Algeria sustained a shock 2-1 home defeat by Guinea in Group G, with Aguibou Camara firing the 63rd-minute winner. Senegal had to beat the visiting Democratic Republic of Congo to regain first place in Group B, but were held to a 1-1 draw after Fiston Mayele equalised with five minutes remaining. The stalemate left the Senegalese two points behind Sudan, who won 2-0 in Mauritania, and the Congolese lie third.

Crystal Palace forward Jordan Ayew scored in added time as Ghana came from behind in Group I to triumph 2-1 in Mali and rise from fifth to second. Libya rose two places to the top of Group D after a 2-1 victory over Mauritius in eastern coastal city Benghazi.

Faisal al Badri converted a penalty only for 35-year-old Kevin Bru to draw the Indian Ocean

islanders level. Ahmed Ekraha scored his second goal of the qualifying campaign before half-time, and it proved the match-winner for the Mediterranean Knights. Libya were reduced to 10 men on 83 minutes when centre-back Ali Youssef was shown a straight red card.

Victory lifted the Libyans to seven points, three more than Cameroon and Cape Verde, who meet in Yaounde today. Serbian Milutin Sredojevic coaches Libya having previously benn in charge of Rwanda, Uganda (twice) and Zambia, as well as numerous African clubs.

Malawi moved within three points of Group H pacesetters Tunisia thanks to a 3-1 win over Sao Tome e Principe in Lilongwe. It was a predictable outcome given that the Malawian Flames were 63 places higher than their opponents in the world rankings. The home team got off to a flying start with Chawanangwa Kaonga and Lanjesi Nkhoma scoring within 14 minutes. Sao Tome halved the deficit after half-time through Denilson da Silva before Chifundo Mphasi assured Malawi would collect maximum points by scoring 12 minutes from time.

Tunisia, seeking a third straight appearance at the World Cup finals, have nine points, Namibia seven and Malawi six. A Group E fixture between Congo Brazzaville and Niger was not played, reportedly because of a dispute over where it should take place. It was originally set for Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo across the Congo river from Brazzaville, because the national stadium in Congo was sub standard. However, the Brazzaville stadium was approved for international football after a last-minute inspection and, when Niger insisted on playing Kinshasa, Congo refused to go there.