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SPORT



FOOTBALL

Argentina represented themselves in 'best possible way' at World Cup: Fernandez

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FOOTBALL

Arrogance or pride? Argentina grapples with WC villain label

'We can't expect the world to understand us, our way of being, feeling, and expressing ourselves'

AFP
Buenos Aires, Argentina

Critics blasted Argentina for dirty tactics and poor sportsmanship during their 1-0 loss to Spain, cementing the country's status as World Cup villain that grew throughout the tournament.

But Argentines argue they are just passionate and misunderstood. "I think we deserve some credit for not being very well-liked, because of this tendency to be arrogant and look down on most people from a pedestal," said Leo Simone, 55, a lawyer, from his home north of Buenos Aires.

"They confuse arrogance with pride," his wife chimed in, preferring not to give her name.

While star Lionel Messi is beloved around the world, anti-Argentina sentiment grew as critics argued they were FIFA's darling and received favorable referee calls such as penalties and cards shown to opponents.

Then came the final, replete with fouls, brawls on the pitch, and the Argentine squad turning their backs when Spain received the World Cup trophy.

The *New York Times* called it a "tetchy, petulant and distasteful performance."

Former Germany player Thomas Hitzlsperger wrote on X that the team were "disgusting sportsmen" and British television personality Piers Morgan said "they basically just went around whacking as many Spanish players as they could."

Near Ezeiza Airport, where thousands of fans welcomed the players returning to Buenos Aires on Monday night, Maximiliano Heredia, a 35-year-old construction worker, said: "We've always been criticized, we're used to it. But we always give it our all."

'We love it'

Many Argentines online wore



Fans hold a banner depicting Argentine football legends Diego Maradona, Mario Kempes and Lionel Messi holding FIFA World Cup trophies as supporters gather near the Argentine Football Association training camp in Ezeiza, Buenos Aires, on Monday, while awaiting the arrival of Argentina's team from the United States following its defeat in the World Cup final. (AFP)

the criticism as a badge of honor. "There's something about Argentine irreverence that they can't tolerate. Our rebelliousness irritates them, enrages them...they call us cocky, cheaters, dirty. And we love it, it fills us with pride," journalist Pedro Rosemblat wrote on his Instagram.

Sports journalist Ezequiel Fernandez Moores told AFP that some criticism was justified: "Sometimes we think we're the center of the universe, that God and our own navel are Argentine."

He said local football codes of

provocation, mockery, and boasting did not translate to a global audience. "We can't expect the world to understand us, our way of being, feeling, and expressing ourselves," he said.

Nevertheless, the team turning their backs on Spain as they received the cup was "not right," he said. The lawyer Simone rejects the notion that physical play makes Argentina a violent team.

"Argentina is a team that fights hard, like almost all South American football, but Spain also resorted to tactical fouls," he said.

"It's football: if you don't like being hit, play volleyball."

For Evelio Rubio, a 47-year-old Venezuelan neurologist who has lived in Argentina for a decade, it is impossible to understand from outside how "football is experienced here."

For a Venezuelan accustomed to his national team not winning titles, experiencing that passion from within "is spectacular."

Racism accusations

Argentine fans and some players have also faced accusations of racism -

ism - such as a chant sung by the team in the past mocking the Black players on the French team as not being really French.

There is also a long history of club-level fans throwing bananas on the field or making monkey gestures at Brazilian fans or black players.

During this World Cup, FIFA condemned racism in a statement after an Argentine supporter told a Black US influencer known as IShowSpeed to go "cry at the zoo" during a livestream.

American actor Samuel L. Jack-

son stirred controversy when he urged black people in an Instagram story not to support Argentina which he dubbed one of "the most racist countries in the world."

Sociologist Ivan Schuliaquer of the National University of San Martin said people should not take racism related to football and apply it generally to Argentine society and history. This racism exists and should not be denied, he said.

"But, in many cases, these labels come from colonizing countries that have not yet fully resolved the issue of racism."

SPOTLIGHT

Thousands welcome home Argentina, without Messi, despite loss

AFP
Ezeiza, Argentina

Thousands of fans braved the cold and rain Monday to give a rapturous welcome to the Argentine football squad who landed back home without star Lionel Messi, after their World Cup final loss to Spain.

It was not the homecoming Argentines had hoped for, four years after millions celebrated their team's tournament victory in 2022, but fresh scenes of joyful chaos filled the street as they danced, sang and set off fireworks to thank the players.

The Argentine Football Association (AFA) said earlier that some squad members would not be on the flight, and iconic team captain Messi was not seen descending from the aircraft in images broadcast on local television.

Coach Lionel Scaloni and the rest of the team were welcomed with a red carpet outside the aircraft and a military band.

They then boarded a bus, waving to frenzied fans along the way.

Despite falling short of a second straight championship, "Argentines will celebrate anyway," said

housewife Marga Ledezma. The 36-year-old thanked Messi for "all the years he made us happy," urging him not to quit playing for Argentina, but admitting this would be difficult as he was 39.

Argentina lost 1-0 to Spain in a game that has been criticized in international media for a plethora of fouls and displays of poor sportsmanship from the Albiceleste.

"I think they criticize us because we know what it's like to suffer, that we get up, we fall down again, and we keep going," said Ledezma.

Many fans highlighted that the real victory for Argentina was the 2-1 semi-final win over England, played against the backdrop of a lingering dispute between the countries over the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands.

Some carried flags declaring "The Falklands are Argentine." FIFA is investigating the Argentine team after players held up a banner bearing the phrase after their win against England which sparked a backlash from London.

"This team united us all, and we should be grateful for that. We will always be there for them, rain or shine. I would say thank you to Messi and that he gave it his all,"

said Leonardo Barrientos, 36, who works in a textile workshop.

Maria Ortiz, 28, came to welcome the team with her two-year-old, and said Spain "deserved the win" but she was "happy for what the team gave us."

Messi wrote on Instagram on Monday that "the pain is immense and it's going to take a long time for this wound to heal."

"I'll also hold on to all the good memories," he wrote alongside a photo of himself. "Today it's hard to appreciate what we achieved, but this squad reached two consecutive World Cup finals."

With the tournament over, President Javier Milei announced that a future date agreed with the team would be set as a public holiday to celebrate their performance in the World Cup. No further details have been announced.

While crestfallen after the loss, thousands of Argentines headed to the traditional celebration point at the Obelisk in Buenos Aires where they partied for hours on Sunday evening.

Late at night, brief clashes broke out at the monument and police used water cannons, tear gas, and rubber bullets to disperse revelers. Fifteen people were detained, according to police sources.



Argentina players ride aboard an open-top bus towards the Argentine Football Association training camp in Ezeiza, Buenos Aires, on July 20, 2026, after returning from the United States following its defeat in the FIFA World Cup final. (AFP)

CYCLING

Evenepoel clinches ‘special’ individual time-trial battle

Evenepoel, 26, conquered stage 16 course along shores of Lake Geneva 28 seconds quicker than Pogacar



Belgian rider Remco Evenepoel cycles to the finish line of the 16th stage of the 113th edition of the Tour de France, covering a distance of 26kms between Evian-les-Bains and Thonon-les-Bains in the French Alps, yesterday. (AFP)

AFP
Thonon-les-Bains, France

Olympic champion Remco Evenepoel stormed to victory in yesterday's 26.1km individual time-trial at the Tour de France to shave valuable seconds off Tadej Pogacar's overall lead. Belgian Evenepoel, 26, blasted over the stage 16 course along the shores of Lake Geneva 28 seconds quicker than reigning champion Pogacar in second. Everyone else finished more than a minute back, with Dane Mattias Skjelmose taking third at 1min 04sec. That performance by the world and Olympic time-trial champion - on Belgium's national holiday - cut four-time Tour winner Pogacar's overall lead to 4min 32sec. "It's amazing, it was a very nice TT (time-trial), a lot of people on the side of the road," said Evenepoel. "My whole family from both sides being here, my parents came just today. My wife is here with her parents and the siblings as well. "And also on the Belgian national day is pretty special - I read this morning it's been a while

since Belgium won on National Day, so I'm proud to be the one." It was Evenepoel's second successive stage victory after he triumphed on Sunday's mountainous 15th stage. It was his fourth Tour stage victory overall, and his third in time-trials. He also extended the gap to third-placed Isaac del Toro to more than two minutes. But it was a miserable day for Evenepoel's Red Bull-Bora Hansgrohe team-mate Florian Lipowitz. Two days after two-time former winner Jonas Vingegaard crashed out of the Tour while sitting second overall, German Lipowitz went down hard on a bend and was forced out of the race. He had been fifth overall until that point and had set the fourth fastest time in the three intermediate time-checks. But several minutes after he crashed, Lipowitz was escorted to a medical vehicle holding his left arm. "That's very unfortunate, it's like a bitter-sweet pill to swallow with this victory, so I wish him all the best and I hope it's not too bad," Evenepoel said of his team-mate. Both Pogacar and Del Toro had a scare going through the same bend where Lipowitz fell but managed to stay upright.

From the moment Evenepoel began his time-trial, it was clear he was on course to do something special. Once the top 10 contenders began their races against the clock, Skjelmose set the fastest time, well ahead of the best of the rest. Lipowitz, Del Toro and French teenage prodigy Paul Seixas were only a handful of seconds behind at the three time-checks. But when Evenepoel went through the first, it was clear that he was riding at a different pace. Only Pogacar could stay within potential touching distance but he was seven seconds down at the first time-check, with Skjelmose 22sec back. Those gaps ballooned to 14sec and 56sec by the second time-check. That was the uphill part of the course and was where Evenepoel gained most of his time. On the following descent and then a flat run to the finish, he gained only eight seconds on Skjelmose, 10 on Seixas and 13 on Pogacar. "I think it was a really good execution from start to finish, he had good control," said Red Bull sporting director Klaas Lodewyck. "It's mixed emotions, let's say. We're over the moon with the win from Remco, but the loss of Lipo was a big blow for the team."

TOUR DE FRANCE HIT BY NEW WAVE OF ANTI-DOPING TESTS

EVIAN, FRANCE: Several Tour de France teams, including that of Olympic champion Remco Evenepoel, confirmed yesterday they had faced anti-doping controls during the race's final rest day. However, unlike those on Sunday targeting Tour leader Tadej Pogacar and former champion Jonas Vingegaard, these did not happen in the middle of the night. Pogacar and Evenepoel had been amongst a number of riders to blast the night-time controls carried out by the International Testing Agency (ITA) as "inhumane" or disrespectful. Evenepoel's Red Bull-Bora Hansgrohe, the Decathlon CMA CGM team of French teenage sensation Paul Seixas and French outfit Groupama-FDJ United were amongst the teams targeted on Monday evening - although in some cases, the riders tested had already gone to bed. "We were also visited last night, some riders were already asleep," Red Bull manager Ralph Denk told German television channel ZDF. Their eight riders were tested at 10:00 pm, a spokesperson said. Decathlon's seven remaining riders in the race were tested at around 8:30 pm. Picnic-PostNL, Jayco-AlUla and Bahrain Victorious also faced

tests. The ITA is an independent organisation which has been designated by the International Cycling Union (UCI) since 2021 to carry out doping controls. These tests have become a hot topic at the Tour after Vingegaard and Pogacar were visited by the ITA at 2:00 am and 5:00 am respectively on Sunday, just hours before a major mountain stage. Vingegaard crashed on that stage after coming down on a bend and broke his collarbone, leading to him quitting the race. Pogacar speculated afterwards his arch rival's disturbed sleep could have contributed to a lack of concentration which resulted in his fall. Doping tests are generally done between 5:00 am and 11:00 pm but the ITA had petitioned a Paris judge to get permission to carry out a night-time test. On Monday, the CPA union which represents professional cyclists blasted the process as counter-productive. But Jonathan Vaughters, the manager of the EF Education team, who in 2012 admitted to having doped during his cycling career, a part of which was spent in the US Postal team of Lance Armstrong, applauded the controls. "2am testing is one of the very effective ways to prevent peptide (EPO, hGH) and testosterone micro dosing," he said.



Tadej Pogacar wearing the yellow jersey in action during stage 16 of the Tour de France yesterday. (Reuters)

CRICKET

Cummins, Hazlewood and Lyon are back for Australia

Reuters
Melbourne

Australia captain Pat Cummins, fellow fast bowler Josh Hazlewood and veteran spinner Nathan Lyon have returned from injury to be included in a 13-man squad for next month's two-Test home series against Bangladesh. The trio were named yesterday for matches in Darwin (Aug. 13-17) and Mackay (Aug. 22-26), which form part of the World Test Championship cycle, after playing only three Tests between them during the Ashes in the last home summer. Australia's "big four" of Cummins, Hazlewood, Mitchell Starc and Lyon have not bowled together since the West Indies tour a year ago due to various injuries but chief selector George Bailey said it was too early to confirm whether they would all turn out against Bangladesh, despite being fit. "We won't be locking in an 11 this far out," Bailey told reporters in a video call yesterday. "We do know that across this two-Test series, the depth is there." With 295 Test wickets at an average of 24.21, 35-year-old Hazlewood has been one of Australia's most devastating bowlers but injuries have limited his output in recent years, including forcing him to miss the entire Ashes series with hamstring and Achilles problems. In his absence, 37-year-old seamer Scott Boland took 20 wickets in an excellent series in the 4-1 defeat of England, and Bailey was frank about the competition Hazlewood faces from the Victoria quick. "Scotty would never say it, but yeah, I think he's mounting a strong case that when you use the words of big three (fast bowlers), that he could be one of those," said Bailey. Hazlewood's recall means no place for Michael Neser despite the paceman's fine Ashes campaign.



The squad is the first following opener Usman Khawaja's retirement, potentially creating opportunity at the top of the order. South Australia opener Jake Weatherald has been retained despite struggling during his debut Test series in the Ashes when he averaged 22.33 across the five matches. The pocket-sized lefthander has yet to convince but Bailey said selectors saw positives in the opening combination with Travis Head during the Ashes. "Hopefully we do see some growth out of that (Ashes) and some understanding of what

it takes for success at test level," he said. Cameron Green has also held onto his spot after a disappointing Ashes with bat and ball, and is one of two all-rounders in the squad with Beau Webster. Josh Inglis was retained as a potential middle order batting option. **Australia squad:** Pat Cummins (captain), Scott Boland, Alex Carey, Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Jake Weatherald, Beau Webster.

SPOTLIGHT

Madeleine's brother to swim for Scotland at Commonwealth Games

AFP
London

Madeleine McCann's younger brother Sean will swim for Scotland at the forthcoming Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. Sean McCann was just two years old when his sister Madeleine disappeared shortly before her fourth birthday during a holiday in Praia da Luz, Portugal, in 2007. Madeleine remains missing despite a worldwide hunt, while a British police probe into her disappearance has been active since 2011. Sean, 21, is expected to compete in a number of freestyle swimming events at the Commonwealth Games, which start in Scotland on Thursday. He hopes the Games will propel him into contention for a place in the Great Britain team for the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles. A Loughborough University student, Sean previously represented Scotland at the Commonwealth Youth Games in Tobago in 2023, where he finished fifth in the 400m freestyle event. Writing on the Joe Humphries Memorial Trust website, he said: "I started competitive sport when I was eight, joining Charnwood triathlon club. "It was here that I discovered my passion for swimming and I joined Loughborough Town swimming club to increase the number of swim sessions I did per week. "At the age of ten, I was selected to swim at City of Leicester and I



have since gone on to win multiple county titles as well as becoming regional and National champion in my age group. "I train nine times a week in the pool, as well as three gym sessions, totalling over 20 hours of training per week." It is not known if Madeleine's parents Kate and Gerry McCann will be at the Tollcross International Swimming Centre to watch their son in action. Speaking in December, Gerry McCann said hope of finding Madeleine was "slim", but not "extinguished". "Madeleine's been missing for 18 years, and the bottom line is, we still don't know what's happened to her," he told BBC Radio 4's Today programme.

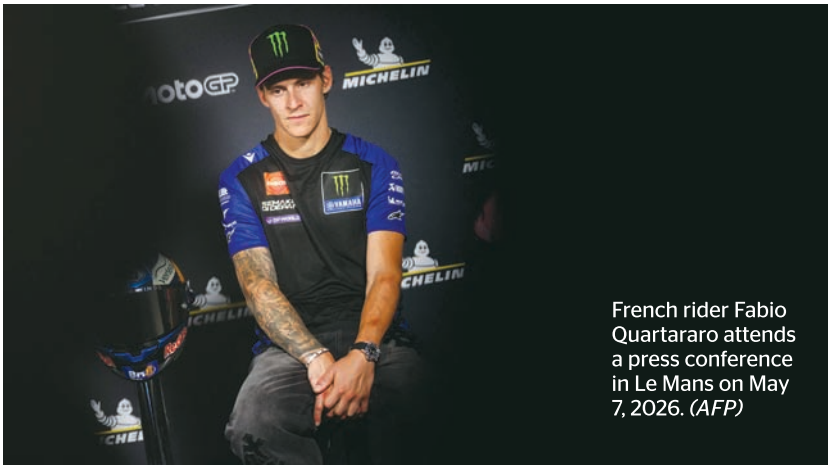
MOTOGP

Quartararo ready to make Honda switch

AFP
Paris

Former MotoGP world champion Fabio Quartararo will join Honda on a two-year deal next season, the team announced yesterday, as the Frenchman bids to reignite his career. The 27-year-old is set to leave Yamaha after eight seasons. He won the MotoGP title in 2021 and finished runner-up the following year but has since struggled to maintain that level. “Honda Racing Corporation (HRC) are pleased to announce the signing of Fabio Quartararo for the 2027 and 2028 MotoGP World Championship seasons,” the team said in a statement. “Quartararo will race

for the factory Honda HRC team as the 850cc era of MotoGP begins from 2027.” His move to Honda had appeared increasingly certain for weeks after other teams confirmed their rider line-ups for next season. The Japanese manufacturer, which has been rebuilding since the departure of Marc Marquez to Ducati in 2024, is banking on the Frenchman to help revive its fortunes. The 2027 season will usher in new technical regulations, reducing engine capacity from 1,000cc to 850cc, a change that could reshuffle the competitive order and potentially end the dominance enjoyed in recent years by Ducati and now Aprilia. Quartararo’s first season in MotoGP was in 2019 and he quickly established himself at the highest level, two years later becoming the first French rider to win the premier-class world championship. But his fortunes have declined dramatically in recent seasons. He has not won a race since 2022, finishing 10th, 13th and ninth over the past three years. He is 14th at the halfway stage of this season. Honda also said yesterday it had signed Colombian rider David Alonso to a multi-year contract but did not reveal whether he would partner Quartararo in the factory team or race for the satellite LCR outfit. Alonso, 20, won the Moto3 crown in 2024. Brazil’s Diogo Moreira, who has enjoyed a promising rookie MotoGP campaign with LCR, could instead be promoted to the factory team next season.



French rider Fabio Quartararo attends a press conference in Le Mans on May 7, 2026. (AFP)

NBA

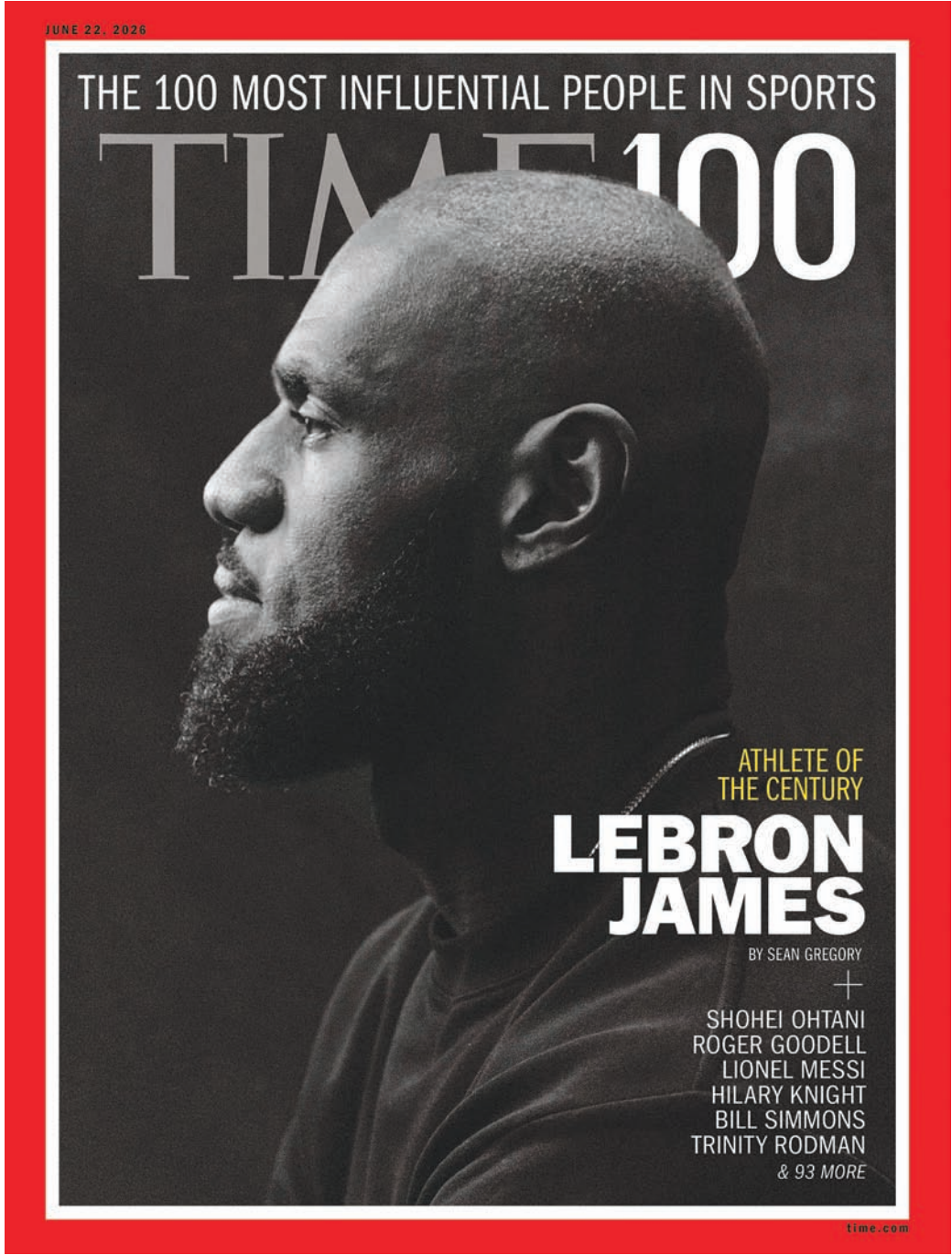
LeBron decision is not going to be rushed, says agent

It’s been three weeks since the NBA star quit Los Angeles Lakers

Reuters
New York

LeBron James’ longtime agent said the NBA superstar will decide on his next team when he’s good and ready. “We’re not going to be rushed,” Rich Paul said on Monday night’s episode of his “Game Over” podcast with Max Kellerman. “We’re not going to be rushed. It’s his choice to make and when he makes the choice, he’ll make it.” Paul also said that the teams who are courting the 22-time All-Star do not need to provide any more information at this time. “There’s been several people to call and say, ‘Hey, Rich, is there anything more we should be doing? We could be doing?’” he said. “And my answer is, ‘No. We don’t need you to go above and beyond about anything. We understand it. It’s clear. All the messages have been sent.’” Yesterday marked three weeks since Paul told the Los Angeles Lakers that the 41-year-old forward was not returning to the team for his record-setting 24th NBA season and was entering free agency. Potential landing spots for the NBA’s all-time leading scorer include the Golden State Warriors and Philadelphia 76ers or a possible return to the Miami Heat or Cleveland Cavaliers, ESPN reported. “I won’t hold you guys up too much longer,” James said during a public appearance in New York last week. Paul said he addressed the situation with NBA commissioner Adam Silver, who said last Thursday that he wanted the four-time league MVP and four-time NBA champion “to make his announcement already, so we can finish the schedule.”

“I saw Adam in New York and we discussed it,” Paul said. “And like I said, it’s still his choice. So if he doesn’t really know, you can’t rush it. You can’t rush it.” On the podcast, Paul insisted that James is not dragging out the process to build suspense, as was the case with his televised announcement in 2010 - hyped



The front cover of the Time magazine's June edition with the portrait for NBA superstar LeBron James.

as “The Decision” - that he was leaving the Cavaliers to join the Heat. “I think it’s important for people to understand: We’re not making this about attention and a spectacle,” Paul said. “It’s not about a ‘Decision’ or anything

like that. He has a choice to make. He has a business choice to make. We’re not going to sit here and decide or allow someone else to decide when he makes that decision. ... It’s a business choice that he’s making. And I think as an athlete, why is it that an athlete

has to rush his choice?” James averaged 20.9 points, 7.2 assists and 6.1 rebounds in 60 games with the Lakers in 2025-26. He owns career averages of 26.8 points, 7.5 rebounds and 7.4 assists in a record 1,622 games with three teams.

FOCUS

AO to limit cheap tickets after crowding problems

Reuters
Melbourne

The Australian Open will place daily limits on cheap tickets to the tennis Grand Slam for the first time after long queues and crowding blighted the tournament in January. Organisers Tennis Australia said yesterday it would cap allocations of its A\$49 (\$34) “ground passes” during the first week of the main draw as they expected demand to be stronger than ever in 2027. “This decision reflects the growing popularity of the AO and will help ensure fans are able to make the most of everything on offer across the precinct,” the governing body said in a statement. Ground passes allow holders to roam between matches outside the major showcourts at Melbourne



Park and are hugely popular among casual fans. However, a spike in attendances in recent years has contributed to long queues to access courts and raised concerns about a declining fan experience. A record 1,368,043 fans attended the 2026 tournament through its three-week schedule which saw Carlos Alcaraz claim the men’s singles title and Elena Rybakina the women’s on the final weekend.

ASIAN TOUR JOINS EUROPEAN-PGA ALLIANCE IN SETBACK FOR LIV GOLF

The PGA Tour, Europe’s DP World Tour and the Asian Tour announced a strategic alliance yesterday in another potential setback for LIV Golf. The DP World Tour said this new chapter for global golf is effective immediately and runs through at least 2029, creating new commercial and playing opportunities while establishing pathways for leading Asian Tour members to join European circuits starting in 2027. “Bringing the three Tours together under one partnership will increase the bandwidth of the professional game in Asia,” said Cho Minn Thant, commissioner and CEO of the Asian Tour. “Not only will co-sanctioning events see our members competing regularly on the global stage, but we are excited to welcome players from the other Tours to our pinnacle events, which showcase the strength and diversity of golf in Asia.” The Asian Tour has had a relationship with LIV Golf since the rival Saudi Arabia-backed tour launched in 2022. LIV Golf invested \$300mn in the Asian Tour and created the International Series, featuring purses of up to \$2mn. Before that, the DP World Tour had an alliance with the Asian Tour and co-sanctioned events from 2016-21. The new relationship is expected to feature at least two co-sanctioned Asian Tour events in each of the next three years. “We are delighted to rekindle our historic relationship with the Asian Tour and indeed strengthen it with the addition of the PGA

TOUR to our new partnership,” said Ben Cowen, chief tournament and operations officer for the DP World Tour. “As Golf’s Global Tour, we bring together the best international talent and the formal pathways established by this partnership will provide unprecedented international opportunities for Asian Tour members. Our agreement therefore represents not only a hugely positive step for golf in Asia, but also an exciting new era of collaboration for our game globally.” PGA Tour senior vice president of international Christian Hardy praised the three tours’ “shared vision for the future of professional golf.” “Through our Strategic Alliance with the DP World Tour, we have worked to build a more connected global golf ecosystem, and we are excited to welcome the Asian Tour into that effort,” Hardy said. “Together, we are creating new opportunities for players, enhancing key National Opens around the world and continuing to evolve and strengthen pathways to identify and develop the next generation of elite talent.” World No. 2 Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland posted about the alliance on X. “Positive news,” he wrote, “and great to see the respective tours working together for the good of international golf.” The alliance is another blow to LIV Golf, which is already seeking alternative funding sources after Saudi Arabia’s Public Investment Fund announced earlier this year that it is pulling the financial plug at the end of this season.

GOLF

Rahm on the verge of LIV title, takes cryptic tone on future

Reuters
Rochester, England

Jon Rahm has an outside shot at clinching another individual championship at LIV Golf United Kingdom this week, but the Spaniard doesn’t expect a lot of clarity on or off the course at this point in the season. Rahm, who won consecutive LIV Golf titles and leads Bryson DeChambeau in a bid for his third in a row this season, stuck around after playing the Open Championship for LIV’s UK event at JCB Golf and

Country Club. He holds a 928.58 to 644.40 lead over DeChambeau and is well clear of Joaquin Niemann in third place (344.66). Rahm beat Niemann and DeChambeau won third in the individual race in 2025. “It means a lot more than the simple fact that you’re winning. It means that you’re playing good golf consistently, and it means that the process has been working. I’ve always taken a lot of pride in being consistent and having a lot of top 10s, and I think that reflects on those wins,” Rahm said yesterday in Rochester, England.

“But to wrap it up this early, I still need to win, and I still need to expect a bad week from Bryson, which based on how he’s been playing last week most likely won’t happen. I would expect a fight from him and other players, and I still need to perform at my best to finish it off.” LIV Golf has been on scheduled hiatus with only tournaments in New Jersey at Trump National in Bedminster (Aug. 6-9) and LIV Indianapolis (Aug. 20-23) before the team championship is staged in Michigan the final weekend in August.

What the future holds for Rahm and all of LIV Golf appears to be up in the air as early as September. Rahm confirmed he was “in contact” with the decision-makers steering the purported PGA Tour competitor as LIV seeks to find a funding stream or two following the exit of Saudi Arabia’s Public Investment Fund. “We know a lot of what’s going on, yeah,” Rahm said, but as for those details, there are none “I can share with you guys right now,” he said. “I’m always optimistic. I play a game for a living. I can’t really be too upset about how things are

going in life. Even though I’m very frustrated on the course very often, off the course I’m very different to what a lot of people think.” Rahm finished tied for 46th at Royal Birkdale last week to walk away with \$51,707, a disappointment considering he entered the weekend in a tie with several players in eighth place. The wheels came off with a bogey barrage on Sunday. “If there was an overall (theme) for the week, it was just I simply couldn’t hole enough putts,” Rahm said of his performance at the Open Championship.



FOOTBALL

Argentina represented themselves in ‘best possible way’: Enzo

‘As time goes by, you realise there is something much bigger than just a result’

AFP
London

Enzo Fernandez insists Argentina represented themselves in the “best possible way” at the World Cup despite the Chelsea midfielder’s red card in the final and a host of ugly incidents in their controversial campaign.

Fernandez was sent off for a second booking after clattering into Spain’s Pau Cubarsi in the closing stages of normal time in Sunday’s 1-0 loss.

The 25-year-old’s premature exit was the latest in a series of clashes to cast a shadow over Argentina’s run to the final.

Leandro Paredes appeared to throw punches at members of the Spain squad as they celebrated their victory, with FIFA subsequently launching an investigation into potential disciplinary breaches following the unsavoury post-match scenes.

They also turned their backs on Spain when the Spanish received their medals and the trophy.

Argentina’s players also caused controversy by displaying a banner reading “Las Malvinas son Argentinas” (The Falklands are Argentine) after beating England in the semi-finals.

Argentina invaded the British Overseas Territory in the South Atlantic in 1982.

But Britain regained the archi-



Enzo Fernandez of Argentina reacts as he walks off the pitch after receiving a red card during the FIFA World Cup against Spain at New York New Jersey Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, on July 19, 2026. (AFP)

pelago in a brief war after then prime minister Margaret Thatcher dispatched a naval taskforce.

Fernandez took to Instagram to defend his country for their World Cup performance, but made no

mention of his sending off in his message to supporters.

“As time goes by, you realise there is something much bigger than just a result,” he said.

“For years, this group has repre-

sented the team in the best possible way. It teaches that competing isn’t just about winning; it’s about giving your all for the jersey and never giving up.”

Fernandez was a member of the

Argentina team that beat France to win the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

But Fernandez’s hopes of a second successive title were shattered after his dismissal as Ferran Torres’s 106th-minute strike settled a dour final marred by Argentina’s defensive tactics.

“It has been a privilege to be part of a group that always stepped up, competed at the highest level, and defended these colours with pride, humility, and commitment,” he said.

“I want to thank all the Argentina fans. Thank you for always being there, for supporting us in every match, for the affection, for the unconditional support, and for making us feel at home anywhere in the world.

“Wearing my country’s jersey is the greatest honour of my career, and I will continue to give my all every time I get to defend it.”

Meanwhile, Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez will consider his international future in the aftermath of the final heartbreak.

The 33-year-old Aston Villa star, who won the World Cup four years ago, said on Instagram: “I dreamed of winning it again; I dreamed of bringing it back to Argentina and making history once more.

“Honestly, the pain is hard to put into words. Now I have to reflect on many things, see how to move forward, and decide if it’s time to step aside. I am truly sorry. I gave it my all to help my country and my team-mates.”

FIFA destroying football industry: La Liga chief says

The president of the Spanish football league, **Javier Tebas**, accused FIFA of acting “irresponsibly” following the announcement of discussions regarding a possible 64-team World Cup in 2030, in an interview with an Italian sports daily published yesterday.

Tebas also said that FIFA president Gianni Infantino’s time was “over”, telling *La Gazzetta dello Sport* that there is a “system that is fundamentally flawed”, which has allowed him to lead football’s global governing body for a decade.

“The football industry is not just about the World Cup, however important it may be,” he said.

“They are destroying the football industry - which generates tens of thousands of jobs - for an event that lasts 40 days and involves only a minority of players.”

At the World Cup opening ceremony in June, Infantino mentioned “discussions about expanding to 64 teams” for the World Cup’s centenary in 2030, which will be co-hosted primarily by Spain, Portugal and Morocco, with Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina also welcoming some matches.

“We have repeatedly expressed our concerns about the competition calendar. And now they want to organise a 64-team World Cup,” Tebas added, emphasising that “it is the domestic leagues that keep this sport alive”.

“We need fewer national teams and better protection for domestic football at all levels. They don’t realise this and are making decisions irresponsibly,” Tebas added.



TRIBUTE

Former United boss Ferguson salutes old rival Keegan

AFP
London

Former Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson has saluted Kevin Keegan for building Newcastle’s “greatest team” following his old rival’s death aged 75.

Keegan passed away on Monday after battling cancer, with Ferguson joining the tributes for one of football’s most endearing characters. Ferguson and Keegan were involved a fierce battle for Premier League supremacy, with United famously pipping Newcastle to the title in 1996.

Frustrated by Ferguson’s comments in the media towards the end of that tense title fight, Keegan memorably ranted at the Scot in a iconic television interview.

But despite that row, Ferguson remained friendly with former Liverpool and England striker Keegan, who earned his admiration with an impressive rebuilding job at Newcastle.

The Magpies were in danger of relegation to the third tier when Keegan took over, but he saved them from relegation before winning promotion to the Premier League in 1993.

Keegan made Newcastle so dy-

namic that they were dubbed “the entertainers” for an eye-catching style that pushed Ferguson’s team all the way in the title race.

“I had the utmost respect for him. We had many duels when he was manager of Newcastle, but I have to say the job he did at Newcastle was fantastic,” Ferguson told *Track Radio* yesterday.

“He re-energised that club and he brought that enthusiasm and fanaticism that great supporters can give. That’s the job he did.

“And he also brought three great players to the club - (David) Ginola, (Faustino) Asprilla, Philippe Albert - and added a bit of class to the team, and I must say the challenges we had with Newcastle at that time at United were huge.”

‘EMOTION AND EXCITEMENT’

Although Newcastle did not win the title under Keegan, who eventually quit in 1997, Ferguson believes the title runners-up were the best team in the club’s history.

“Kevin carried the love of the game on his sleeve, there’s no question about that, and that carried right on to the fans, to the players,” he said.

“That period at Newcastle was of emotion, it was excitement. They brought these great players to the club too and they added to

it, and it gave Newcastle - I think - their best ever team.”

Keegan’s passion boiled over in April 1996 during his emotional blast at Ferguson, whose mind games had rattled the manager, during a *Sky Sports* interview following a Newcastle win at Leeds.

“I’ve kept really quiet but I’ll tell you something, he went down in my estimation when he said that,” Keegan said jabbing his finger towards the camera.

“We have not resorted to that. You can tell him (Ferguson) now, we’re still fighting for this title and he’s got to go to Middlesbrough and get something. And I’ll tell you, honestly, I will love it if we beat them. Love it.”

Keegan’s rallying cry didn’t stop Newcastle blowing a 12-point lead as United took the title.

However, Ferguson revealed the pair bumped into each other at a pub near Wentworth Golf Club a few weeks after that season. They spent the night around a piano with all thoughts of the rivalry forgotten. “The great thing about him, he held no grudges. That was a fantastic quality he had and we had a great night,” Ferguson said.

“All aside whatever happened in previous weeks, that was soon forgotten. I really respected him for that.”

WRESTLING

Qatar’s Shaheen claims silver at World Ranking Series in Budapest



By Sports Reporter

Doha

Qatar’s Shaheen Mohammed produced an outstanding display to claim the silver medal in the 82kg Greco-Roman category at the United World Wrestling (UWW) Ranking Series Championship in Budapest, Hungary.

The Asian champion booked his place in the final with a 4-1 victory over Georgia’s Tornike Mikeladze in the semifinal. Mohammed scored a go-behind after Mikeladze slipped early in the

second period to take a 2-1 lead.

Georgia challenged the move, claiming a leg foul, but the challenge was unsuccessful, awarding Mohammed an additional point to make it 3-1. The Qatari wrestler then capitalized from the par terre position to seal a 4-1 victory.

Mohammed went on to finish runner-up in the final, securing the silver medal and earning Qatar a place on the podium at one of the sport’s premier international ranking events.

Qatar celebrated another podium finish through Arif Mohammadi, who claimed the bronze medal in the 62kg Greco-

Roman category, adding to the nation’s successful campaign in the Hungarian capital.

The medals earned by Mohammed and Mohammadi provide valuable ranking points ahead of upcoming major international competitions and further underline Qatar’s growing presence in international Greco-Roman wrestling.

The Budapest Ranking Series is the fourth and final United World Wrestling Ranking Series event of the 2026 season, bringing together many of the world’s top wrestlers to compete for crucial ranking points and international honors.



Flowers are laid outside St James’ Park following the passing of former Newcastle United player and manager Kevin Keegan in Newcastle yesterday. (Reuters)