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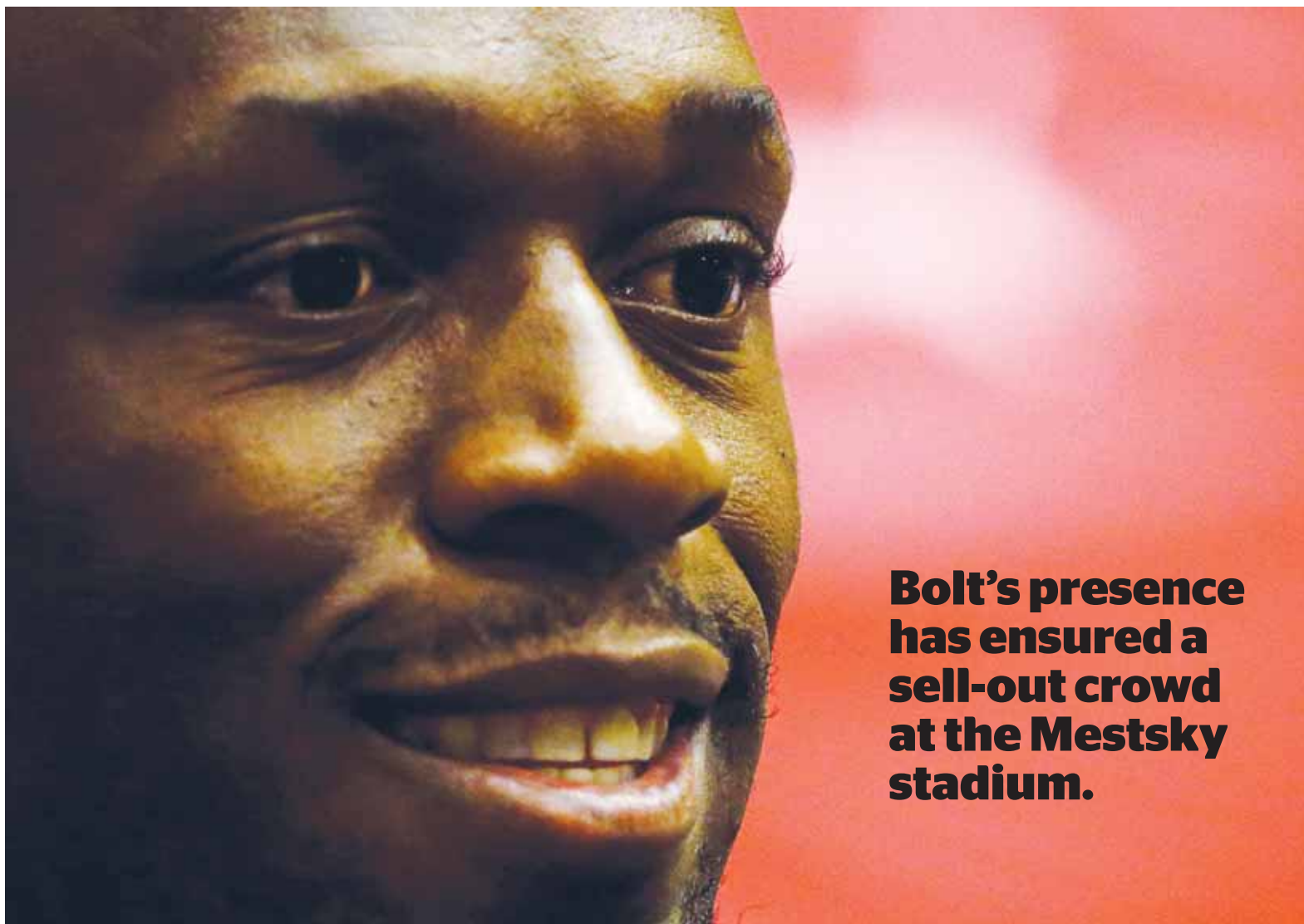
FOOTBALL

Chile out to curb Portuguese star Ronaldo

Page 3

ATHLETICS

Bolt to make European bow in farewell season



Bolt's presence has ensured a sell-out crowd at the Mestky stadium.

AFP
Ostrava, Czech Republic

Jamaican sprint superstar Usain Bolt will today make his first appearance in Europe in his farewell season.

Bolt, winner of eight Olympic and 11 world gold medals, will bring down the curtain on his glittering career at August's world championships in London.

After kicking off his season on home soil in Kingston, the 30-year-old chose Ostrava and the Diamond League meet in Monaco as his two pre-worlds warm-up events.

It will be Bolt's ninth appearance in the north-eastern Czech city, where organiser Alfons Juck has unashamedly gone out of his way to tailor the meet to the Jamaican's plans for the season.

"We gave priority in our preparation and the whole set-up of the meet to Usain," Juck told AFP.

Bolt said a Czech visit was always on the cards. "One meet I was always going to come to was Ostrava," he said.

That is not to say the meet has not attracted other stars, although there is a dearth of US and Jamaican athletes.

South African Wayde van Niekerk will compete in the rarely-run 300m, aiming to shoot down Bolt's meet record of 30.97sec, set back in 2010.

Kenyan 800m star David Rudisha goes in the 1,000m, while Britain's Mo Farah competes in his final 10,000m on the IAAF circuit before quitting the track for road racing after the London worlds.

Van Niekerk summed up the athletes' sentiments that the meet was all about one person, however, Bolt. "This year's really about honouring him and what he's done for the sport," said the 24-year-old South African, who beat Michael Johnson's world record when winning Olympic 400m gold in Rio last year to add to his world crown.

"He's been a massive inspiration to myself and to many other athletes out there. Hopefully, we as an upcoming generation can take the baton and continue what he's done."

Farah has similarly dominated his events.

Since winning silver over 10k at the 2011 world champs in Daegu, the 34-year-old Londoner has

enjoyed an unbroken streak of nine global final wins (the 5,000m in 2011, and the double at the 2012 and 2016 Olympics and the 2013 and 2015 worlds).

Due to trade in the track for a pitch at conquering the marathon, Farah was full of praise for Bolt.

"The guy's incredible, what he's done for the sport," he said.

"It's going to come to an end at some point. I see him as a role model, someone I look up to. When you go through a down patch and say 'how am I going to do it?'; he's shown us the way and I'm just glad to be part of it."

Bolt's presence has ensured a sell-out 15,000-capacity crowd at the Mestky stadium.

Also competing will be Kenya's Olympic steeplechase gold medallist Consensus Kipruto, and American double Olympic triple jump champion Christian Taylor returns to the place of his first major medals at World U18 Championships in Ostrava 2007.

Germany's Olympic javelin champion Thomas Rohler headlines a duel between his German team and the Czech Republic, with four throwers on each side, captained respectively by former champions Klaus Wolfermann and Jan Zelezny.

3X3 BASKETBALL

Qatar begin campaign today in U18 World Cup

Agencies
Chengdu, China

Defending champions Qatar will take on Bahrain on the opening day of the FIBA 3x3 U18 World Cup at the Global Center here today.

Forty teams are taking part in the tournament which will finish on July 2 and is being organised by FIBA in co-operation with the Chinese Basketball Association (CBA) and the Chengdu Municipal Government.

This will be the sixth edition of the FIBA 3x3 U18 World Cup (previously known as 3x3 U18 World Championships). It's the first time that the competition is hosted in China after being staged in Italy (2011), Spain (2012), Indonesia (2013), Hungary (2015) and Kazakhstan (2016).

France's women won the last two editions while Qatar's men struck gold last year in Astana, Kazakhstan. Both teams were automatically qualified for the event as well as the Chinese hosts.

The other teams earned a ticket to their position in the FIBA 3x3 Federation Ranking. This ranking includes sport and development criteria, allowing both the strongest teams on the

field as well as the most active countries to participate in the event, which fulfils a key aim of 3x3: diversity.

Bahrain, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uganda will make their debut at the event.

All games at the FIBA 3x3 U18 World Cup will be played on the same court with 20 men's and 20 women's teams competing in the event and in three individual contests (men's dunk contest, women's skills contest and mixed

Participating teams:

Men: Bahrain (BRN), Belgium (BEL), China (CHN) (Hosts), Georgia (GEO), Hungary (HUN), Indonesia (INA), Israel (ISR), Kyrgyzstan (KGZ), Netherlands (NED), New Zealand (NZL), Philippines (PHI), Poland (POL), Qatar (QAT) (2016 winners), Romania (ROU), Slovenia (SLO), South Korea (KOR), Turkey (TUR), Turkmenistan (TKM), Uganda (UGA), Ukraine (UKR).

Women: Andorra (AND), Argentina (ARG), Australia (AUS), China (CHN) (Hosts), Czech Republic (CZE), Egypt (EGY), France (FRA) (2016 winners), Germany (GER), Hungary (HUN), Italy (ITA), Japan (JPN), Kazakhstan (KAZ), Netherlands (NED), Russia (RUS), Singapore (SIN), Spain (ESP), Sri Lanka (SRI), Switzerland (SUI), United States (USA), Venezuela (VEN).



The World Cup winning Qatar U18 team in 2016.

SPOTLIGHT

IPL rights sold to Vivo for \$341mn, an increase of 554%

IAS
Mumbai

Chinese cellphone manufacturer Vivo yesterday extended the title sponsorship contract with the lucrative Indian Premier League (IPL) by five more years, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced here.

According to BCCI, Vivo bid Rs 2199 crores (\$341mn) to renew its contract, which is a 554 percent increase over the previous contract.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) today announced its association with Vivo as the title sponsor for the Indian Premier League for the next five years," said a statement from the cricket board.

"In the upcoming five IPL seasons (2018 to 2022), Vivo and IPL will have

'In the upcoming five IPL seasons (2018 to 2022), Vivo and IPL will have extensive co-operation in terms of sports events, on-ground activities and marketing campaigns'

extensive cooperation in terms of sports events, on-ground activities and marketing campaigns." Speaking on the development, IPL Chairman Rajeev Shukla said: "We are delighted to have Vivo joining us once again as the title sponsor for IPL for next five years. The association with Vivo has been great for the past two seasons and I am sure they will continue to make it bigger and better." Apart from the IPL, the mobile company has also acquired the rights of becoming the title sponsors of the Pro-Kabaddi League for a period of five years. The deal was announced in May 2017 and it is valued at Rs 300 crore.

Pacquiao eyeing Mayweather rematch: trainer

AFP, Sydney: A rematch between Floyd Mayweather and Manny Pacquiao could be on the cards if the legendary Filipino boxer wins his bout against Australian challenger Jeff Horn this weekend, his trainer said yesterday.

Pacquiao, who was outpointed by Mayweather in the "Fight of the Century" two years ago, will be the strong favourite when he defends his world title against the unbeaten Horn in Brisbane.

But the Horn fight could be critical to whether the "Pac-Man" secures another superfight with his American rival, Freddie Roach told reporters in Brisbane. "He (Horn) can derail us really badly. Manny is, I think,

in a must-win situation. He wants a rematch with Mayweather," Roach said.

"And I mean to get Mayweather you have to look good against Jeff Horn, he has to look good, he has to be impressive."

"I think there is a lot riding on this fight and I feel Manny has to look really good in this fight and the way the training camp went. I think he will."

Pacquiao was coy about a possible rematch, stressing that his focus was on the World Boxing Organisation welterweight title fight against 29-year-old former schoolteacher Horn at Brisbane's Suncorp Stadium.

"If there's a chance, why not. I'm willing, but let's focus first for this fight," the 38-year-old eight-weight world champion told reporters when asked about fighting Mayweather again.

"We don't want to underestimate Horn thinking about another fight, this fight is not done yet." Pacquiao, 38, briefly retired last year before making a successful comeback against Vargas in November, and is juggling boxing with his duties as a senator in the Philippines.

Boxing legend Mayweather, 40, is coming out of retirement to fight mixed martial arts star Conor McGregor in August.

SPOTLIGHT

Jorge Mendes – agent to the stars

Nicknamed 'the shark' by rival agents, the diminutive Mendes has a penchant for being discreet – he keeps his head down and rarely gives interviews

AFP
Madrid

Two decades ago, he was a budding entrepreneur making a living from managing a video club and discotheques. Today, at the age of 51, Jorge Mendes operates in a hyper-moneyed world inhabited by top sportsmen as agent to the stars – including Cristiano Ronaldo. But all is no longer well among the gilded megastars advised by the man who has been elected “best agent of the year” several times at the Globe Soccer Awards. Mendes appeared in court near Madrid yesterday for questioning over striker Radamel Falcao’s alleged tax evasion, just one of his clients to fall foul of Spain’s judiciary.

Monaco’s Falcao is suspected of failing to correctly declare 5.6mn euros (\$6.3mn) of income earned from image rights between 2012 and 2013 while at Atletico Madrid. The Colombian is accused of using a web of shell companies in the British Virgin Islands, Ireland, Colombia and Panama to avoid taxes.

Ronaldo, the world’s highest paid athlete according to *Forbes*, is due to be questioned on July 31 after allegedly evading 14.7mn euros in taxes. Fabio Coentrao, the Portugal international who also plays for Real Madrid, is suspected of having hidden close to 1.3mn euros.

And Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho, another Mendes client, has been accused of failing to pay millions in taxes during his time in charge of Real Madrid. Nicknamed “the shark” by rival agents, the diminutive Mendes has a penchant for being discreet – he keeps his head down and rarely gives interviews.

When he does surface he is generally seen phone in hand or clamped to his ear wheeling and dealing for his stable of some 100 players or coaches whose interests he manages. Yet Mendes has been front page news since an international consortium of media organisations highlighted a huge data leak purporting to show that Ronaldo, Mourinho and others kept millions of earnings out of the taxman’s reach in havens. Mendes, whose company, Gestifute International, is registered in Ireland, had vigorously denied any wrongdoing. He was one of the first to exploit player rights through third parties such as investment funds – a practice FIFA has now made illegal.

Mendes Quality Sports Investments, based in the tax haven of Jersey, offered rich investors the chance to buy a percentage of players’ “economic rights” with a view to making a killing when they were eventually sold on for a hefty transfer fee in jurisdictions operating ultra-low

corporation tax. Such a practice has long been common notably in South America although the English Premier League and also UEFA leagues have officially condemned it. Mendes appears to be an archetypal ‘self-made man’. Born to an oil industry worker in Lisbon he left the Portuguese capital aged 19 to enter the business world in the northern provincial town of Viana do Castelo.

A video club which he opened became a successful venture and soon he would meet Portugal keeper Nuno Espirito Santo in a disco he was also running. A former semi-professional footballer himself, Mendes set about cultivating close links to players, creating his own network and starting to look after their interests.

“He works hard with players and looks after them constantly,” Real Madrid president Florentino Perez once said of Mendes in allusion to his dealing with Ronaldo’s 94mn euro move from Manchester United.

“I have every confidence in him. He is like a big brother for me a father figure in the world of football and godfather to my son,” said Ronaldo in a 2012 documentary which coincided with 15 years of Mendes’ agency work. “Jorge Mendes is for me a great friend, more than an agent,” Mourinho said of their relationship. “Our careers started at the same time and happily things have gone well for both of us,” said the man now in the Old Trafford dugout who after leading Porto to the 2004 Champions League took several Portuguese stars with him to Chelsea.

Mendes’ links with Falcao’s Monaco goes back to his working on the transfer to the French top flight club of Portuguese international Costinha in 1997. Asked about his style of doing business Mendes once said: “I am not one of these agents who races after players making promises...” adding that he represents players interests and intervenes to protect them when clubs would prefer to do deals behind their backs. “Sometimes their (transfer) situation is almost sealed and they themselves know nothing of it.”



Football agent Jorge Mendes (centre) is surrounded by journalists as he arrives at the Court in Pozuelo de Alarcon in Madrid yesterday, to be questioned by Spanish judge as part of a probe into Colombian striker Radamel Falcao's alleged tax evasion. (AFP)

Mendes charged, denies creating shell companies

Madrid: Football super-agent Jorge Mendes yesterday denied he created shell companies for his clients during questioning by a Spanish court investigating alleged tax evasion by striker Radamel Falcao, his company Gestifute said in a statement.

Mendes was charged with tax offences over his possible role in Falcao's alleged tax evasion during his appearance at a court in Pozuelo de Alarcon, an upmarket suburb of Madrid where

many football stars live, a judicial source said.

As Spanish authorities tighten the net around footballers such as Real Madrid superstar Cristiano Ronaldo, another Mendes client suspected of fiscal fraud, their advisers and agents are coming under scrutiny too. Monaco's Falcao is suspected of failing to correctly declare 5.6mn euros of income earned from image rights between 2012 and 2013 while he was at Atletico Madrid. The Colombian is accused of using a

web of shell companies in the British Virgin Islands, Ireland, Colombia and Panama to avoid taxes on the image rights income.

Mendes arrived at a court wearing a dark suit and black tie. The 51-year-old made no comments as he went into court, where he will be questioned over his possible role in Falcao's alleged tax evasion.

He will see the judge just after Falcao's Argentine wife Lorelei Dahiana Taron, who is

merely appearing as a witness, a judicial source said.

Mendes risks being put under official investigation in the case, but his company Gestifute has already denied any wrongdoing. “Neither Jorge Mendes nor the company he manages, Gestifute, participate in or offer any service linked, directly or indirectly, to financial, fiscal or legal advice to their clients,” it said earlier this month.

ROUND-UP

PSG goalkeeper Sirigu joins Torino

Italy goalkeeper **Salvatore Sirigu** (right) left Paris Saint-Germain to join Torino on a three-year deal yesterday that means he should take over as the club's number one from England's Joe Hart.

Sirigu spent the last of his six seasons with PSG on loan in Spain with Sevilla and then Osasuna and, with the 2018 World Cup on the horizon, the Sardinian was looking for more playing time. Sirigu, 30, is expected to take over from Hart after the England goalkeeper's one-year loan from Manchester City recently ended. Hart's future destination is yet to be determined.

BORDEAUX 'INTERESTED' IN LEICESTER'S MENDY

Bordeaux are in the hunt for Leicester's French midfielder Nampalys Mendy, the Ligue 1 side's coach Jocelyn Gourvenne disclosed. Mendy joined Leicester from Nice in a 16mn euro deal in July 2016 as then manager Claudio Ranieri prepared the defence of the Foxes' stunning Premier League title triumph.

But the 25-year-old spent more time off the pitch than on it as perpetual injury hampered his first season in England. “He was bought very expensively by Leicester after a very good season as captain at Nice,” Gourvenne said. “But considering the season he had (with two ankle operations) he wants to return to France, and Bordeaux are interested in him.”

Mendy could join the club in a loan arrangement with an option to buy attached. Six-time French champions Bordeaux finished out of European contention in sixth place last season, 36 points behind champions Monaco. If Mendy does end up at Bordeaux he will team up with his cousin, striker Alexandre Mendy, who is joining from Ligue 1 rivals Guingamp.

DEFENDER KARSORP SET FOR ROMA MEDICAL: CLUB

Serie A runners-up Roma have moved to shore up their defence ahead of next season with the imminent signing of Dutch international defender Rick Karsdorp. Feyenoord full-back Karsdorp, 22, arrived in Rome yesterday morning and “will have a medical in the Italian capital, ahead of a proposed move to the Giallorossi from current club Feyenoord,” Roma said in a statement.

Roma, who have secured an automatic spot in next season's Champions League, are hoping to strengthen for a fresh assault



on the competition next season. However the capital club, who will be coached by former Sassuolo coach Eusebio Di Francesco, have several transfer issues to resolve. New club sporting director Monchi recently oversaw the sale of speedy Egyptian winger Mohamed Salah to Liverpool for a reported 39mn euros. He is also reported to have agreed to sell Greek defender Kostas Manolas to Zenit Saint Petersburg.

FACEBOOK, FOX SIGN DEAL TO LIVESTREAM CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Fox Sports said yesterday it had partnered with Facebook Inc to livestream UEFA Champions League matches during the 2017-18 season. The sports network, owned by Twenty-First Century Fox Inc, said that some matches from Europe's top-tier club soccer tournament will be exclusive to Facebook and Fox Sports GO, while others will be simulcast on television.

Social media companies such as Facebook and Twitter Inc have beefed up their focus on signing live-streaming sports deals as young audience increasingly rely on the internet to watch sports ditching the traditional cable services.

Fox Sports will stream UEFA Champions League matches in the United States on its Facebook pages, starting in September, according to the deal. The partnership includes two live matches per day in the group stage, four round of 16 matches and

four quarter-final matches, Fox said.

SHREWSBURY MAKE LANDMARK BID FOR SAFE STANDING

Third tier Shrewsbury have become the first English club to apply for right to install safe standing in their stadium. The League One team want to create a safe standing area, which would have a capacity of around 500, in their Greenhouse Meadow arena.

Shrewsbury's stadium was built 10 years ago and is one of 29 in the Football League which are eligible to apply for safe standing. Clubs in England's top two divisions have been legally required to have all-seater grounds since the measure was recommended by the 1990 Taylor Report into the 1989 Hillsborough disaster, which saw 96 Liverpool fans killed in crushes caused by over-crowding in the Leppings Lane standing area. Should Shrewsbury win approval from the Sports Ground Safety Authority, then they would become the first all-seater stadium in England and Wales to introduce safe standing. The Premier League recently wrote to its 20 clubs asking if they would be interested in taking part in a trial to reintroduce standing sections in their grounds.

Scottish Premiership champions Celtic last season installed 2,600 rail seats at Parkhead that can be flipped down or locked into an upright position, with safety barriers separating each row, in a move that was considered a success.

QSL

Al Khor sign Hilal Mohammed

QNA
Doha

Al Khor SC yesterday finalised the signing of Hilal Mohamed, who joins them from Umm Salal. Mohamed had joined Umm Salal just last season on a three-year contract. He informed his club however, after only one season, that he would like to go back to his old club.

He had a good season last year with Umm Salal, particularly in the second half. He scored four goals that were crucial for the team. The management

will hold a press conference in a few days to present the player to the media.

HAMOOD YAZIDI SIGNS FOR AL AHLI

Al Ahli SC has signed Hamood al-Yazidi for one season. He joins Al Ahli for the 2017/2018 season with the hope of erasing memories of the last season, when his team finished 10th in the league and was knocked out of the third round of HH the Emir Cup. Al Ahli had also announced Joaquin Caparros as their new manager for next season. The team will hold a training camp in Holland from August 2 to August 22 to prepare for the new season.

FOCUS

Slovak PM urges UEFA action on Italy vs Germany 'farce'

Reuters
Bratislava, Slovakia

Slovakia Prime Minister Robert Fico has written to European football governing body UEFA requesting an investigation into the circumstances surrounding his country's group stage exit from the European Under-21 Championship.

Slovakia were eliminated after Italy beat Germany 1-0 on Saturday in the tournament in Poland, a result that allowed both teams to progress to the semi-finals from Group C. The scoreline was the only one that could have sent both teams through and Fico labelled the match a “farce”, comparing it to the 1982 World Cup game between West Germany and Austria.

Fico's comments, following similar complaints by Slovakia coach Pavel Hapal, were rejected by both German and Italian team officials. “Slovak football talents did everything with regard to sporting performance to win advancement to the next phase of the tournament,” Fico wrote in an open letter to UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin.

“What they were not prepared for, though, was the farce performed by players from countries advanced in football – Italy and Germany. The resulting situation reminded me of ancient football history, when at the 1982 World Cup Germany and Austria played out a similarly unworthy spectacle in front of the fans of this beautiful game at the expense of humble Algeria.”

Italy's coach Luigi Di Biagio told reporters that the allegations were “ridiculous” and that Hapal

Slovakia were eliminated after Italy beat Germany 1-0 on Saturday in the tournament in Poland, a result that allowed both teams to progress to the semi-finals from Group C

should be banned for making them. Carlo Tavecchio, head of the Italian football federation (FIGC), rejected the suggestion “with indignation”.

Horst Hrubesch, the German football federation's sporting director, who played and scored in the 1982 match, also denied the allegations. “I think it's perfectly normal to play cautiously in the last few minutes,” he said. UEFA did not immediately respond to a request for comment. West Germany's 1-0 win over Austria in their final group game of the 1982 World Cup in Spain sent both teams through and eliminated Algeria.

Much of the match appeared to be played at walking pace after Hrubesch scored the only goal of the game in the 10th minute, with neither West Germany nor Austria looking like they were trying to score. Fico urged Ceferin to investigate the Germany-Italy result and change tournament rules to prevent a similar recurrence in future. “I believe that you will have the whole issue investigated and UEFA will make rules for the next tournament which will give precedence to a sportsmanlike performance instead of unfair agreements,” he added.

“It is disrespectful towards the athletes themselves, fans and also the countries they represent.” Twelve teams are taking part, divided into three groups. The winners qualified for the semi-finals along with the best second-placed team, which turned out to be Germany.

CONFEDERATIONS CUP

Chile out to curb Portugal goal-machine Ronaldo

The Real Madrid forward has now scored 16 times in his last 10 games for club and country

AFP
Kazan, Russia

Copa America champions Chile will try to curb Portugal superstar Cristiano Ronaldo in today's Confederations Cup semi-final with the goal-ace in rich form despite a tax storm brewing in Spain. The 32-year-old converted a penalty in Saturday's 4-0 thrashing of New Zealand to claim his 75th international goal.

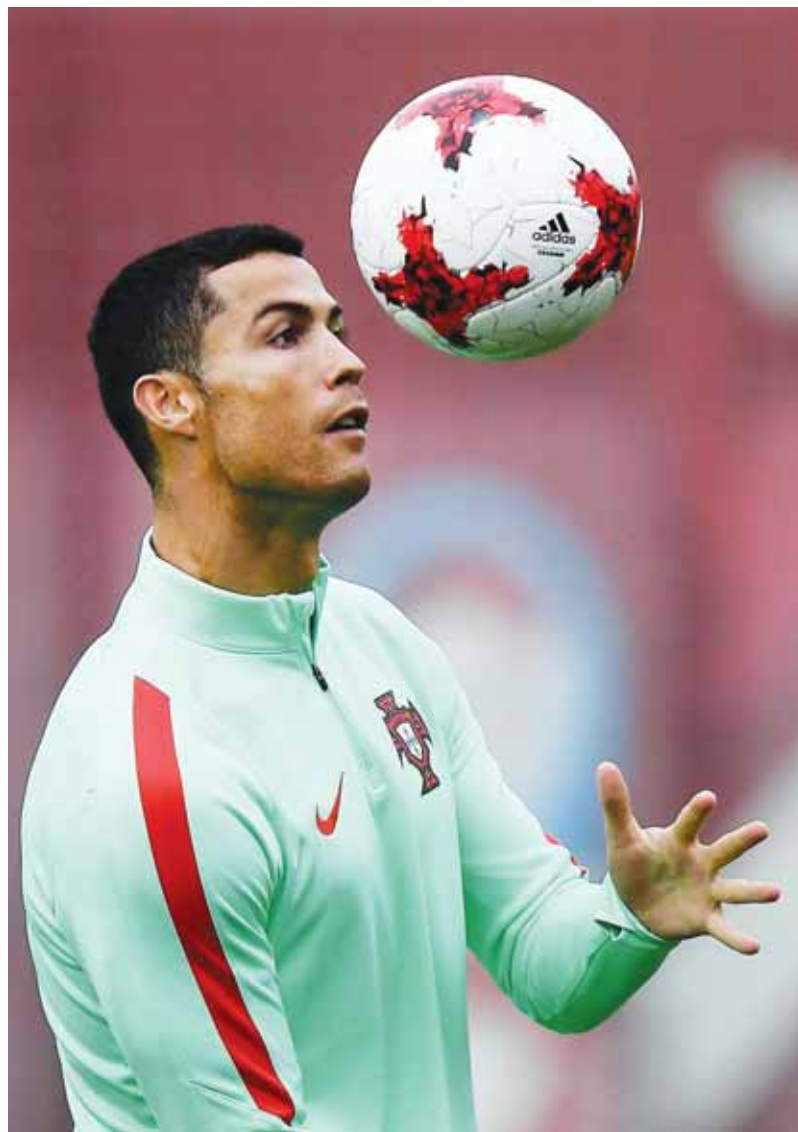
The Real Madrid forward has now scored 16 times in his last 10 games for club and country. The Portugal captain will face tax evasion charges in a Madrid court next month, but has dazzled on the pitch in Russia, claiming man-of-the-match awards in all three group games, netting two goals and providing an assist. After helping steer Portugal to the Euro 2016 title in Paris a year ago, Ronaldo is aiming to win a second international title when the Confederations Cup final concludes on Sunday in Saint Petersburg. Mexico or Germany, who meet in the other semi-final, will face the winners of today's clash in Kazan.

Ronaldo is closing in on the legendary Ferenc Puskas' European record of 84 international goals, despite the off-field turmoil and constant speculation about his future – he has reportedly threatened to quit Real. "We all know he's an amazing player, he's very dangerous and can decide a game alone," said Chile midfielder Marcelo Diaz, who has come up against Ronaldo with his Spanish club Celta Vigo.

"He has had an amazing season in Spain, he's playing here with the same strength, which is why Portugal are in the semi-final. The main thing is trying to stop him getting the ball and scoring."

Chile, who won the Copa America in both 2015 and 2016, will present Portugal with their toughest test so far in Russia, although the South Americans have yet to beat Portugal in three attempts with two defeats and a draw.

Fatigue could well be an issue in Portugal's ranks. Head coach Fernando Santos opted to rest none of his forward line against the Kiwis and it has been a long season for the likes of Ronaldo, Joao Moutinho, Andre Gomes and Bernardo Silva. Manchester City new boy Bruno Silva, 22, went down clutching his right



Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo attends a training session in Kazan, Russia, on the eve of the Confederations Cup semi-final against Chile. (AFP)

foot after scoring in Saturday's win over New Zealand. "We still have 24 hours to decide if he plays or not, he has reacted well to his injury and we'll take the decision tomorrow," said Santos when asked about the former Monaco winger.

Left-back Raphael Guerreiro is struggling with a badly bruised foot and will not feature. With defender Pepe suspended, either Jose Fonte or Luis Neto will partner Bruno Alves at cen-

tre-back as Santos expects a tricky tie against Chile.

"They have a good team, they're aggressive with a fighting, combative spirit, but we are also warriors, we have a great capability to suffer and we don't fear anyone," said Santos. "They are a very dynamic team with a lot of movement and are not an easy team to analyse. Their strengths are many, but like any team they have weaknesses. We will



Chile's Alexis Sanchez training in Kazan, Russia, yesterday. (Reuters)

look to exploit those tomorrow."

Chile coach Juan Antonio Pizzi has all 23 players fit after midfielder Charles Aranguiz recovered from a knock in Sunday's 1-1 draw against Australia. Despite doubts about Alexis Sanchez's Arsenal future, the Chile camp says their star striker is in high spirits.

They hope his good performances will showcase his skills to potential future employers. With a year left on his

Gunners' contract, Sanchez is stalling on signing an extension amid rumours of a switch to German giants Bayern Munich. "He's giving his best here and I think most players would like to be in a similar situation, because the best squads in the world want to have him, even if he is already at a good club," said Pizzi. "He's a responsible person, he knows what he has to do and he's fully focused on Chile."

Liverpool to escape punishment for alleged tapping-up of van Dijk

London: Liverpool are set to escape punishment from the Premier League for the alleged tapping-up of the Southampton defender Virgil van Dijk, with the heat over the issue having rather fizzled out. It had ignited at the beginning of June, when Southampton were furious to read that Van Dijk was keen to join Liverpool, having been won over, in part, by the vision of the club's manager, Jurgen Klopp. They reported Liverpool to the Premier League, arguing that Van Dijk ought not to have been privy to any vision of Klopp's as the Anfield club had not made an official approach to them for the player.

Southampton felt that Liverpool's fingerprints had been on the newspaper stories while it was reported at the time that Klopp had met with Van Dijk in Blackpool to discuss the proposed transfer. The south coast club are aware that direct and indirect approaches for players are commonplace – even if the practice is, technically, forbidden – but, in this instance, they felt that they needed to take a stand, believing Liverpool to have been too blatant in overstepping the mark.

Southampton have insisted that Van Dijk is not for sale while it was clear that they wanted to send out the message that they would not be pushed around by a bigger club. Their action sparked Liverpool into making a public apology, which served to calm the situation – particularly as they also promised to drop their interest in Van Dijk.

The Premier League listened to Southampton's complaint and they asked Liverpool for their version of events but they did not launch a formal investigation. It was believed that Southampton had the evidence to incriminate Liverpool but, in the weeks that have followed the complaint, they have not put it forward. Chelsea and Manchester City would love to sign Van Dijk, who is rated at upwards of £50m and was excellent last season.

FOCUS

'All-powerful' African football club hit by DR Congo political feud

AFP
Lubumbashi, DR Congo

The training pitches and classrooms are fit for one of Africa's most illustrious football clubs, but the political battles rife in Democratic Republic of Congo have stopped Tout Puissant Mazembe from using their new academy.

The teenagers who are meant to be the future stars of African football are losing weight because food rations have been cut back. Lush grass is starting to grow around the buildings that owner Moise Katumbi, exiled tycoon and key opposition leader, has built on his property in Lubumbashi. Katumbi took over Tout Puissant Mazembe – which means All-Powerful Mazembe – in 1997 and spent millions to turn it into a continental football force. They subsequently won the African Champions League title three times – though they also had two early wins in the 1960s.

On the political front, Katumbi, the former governor of mineral-rich Katanga province that takes in Lubumbashi, announced he would challenge President Joseph Kabila in elections due in 2016. But the elections were delayed and Katumbi left the country the same year after being accused of harming state security.

He was also subsequently sentenced in absentia to jail for real estate fraud. The new classes and bedrooms for the Katumbi Football Academy, wholly financed by the exiled businessman, have been ready for a year, but are like a Wild West ghost town. The club says insufficient money is trickling in to pay for operations since Katumbi went into exile in Belgium. There has been no shortage of potential recruits for the academy since it opened in 2012 but its predicament has become increasingly dire, according to managing director Regis Laguesse.

The young players are banned from the academy football pitches for "safety"



Trainer Johan Curbilie (left) talks to Katumbi Football Academy players at the Tout-Puissant Mazembe stadium in Lubumbashi, DR Congo. (AFP)

reasons and can now only use the pitch at the Tout Puissant Mazembe stadium.

"Each month, I weigh the players and for the first time in five years they have lost weight because we have been forced to reduce their food," said Laguesse, a 67-year-old Frenchman, who has trained budding footballers from Abidjan to Bangkok.

From the Tout Puissant Mazembe stadium there is a view of the mines that powered Congo's economic growth after the end of its devastating 1998-2003 war, until the drop in commodity prices in 2015. The young recruits work out there in the faded black jersey of the Mazembe team, often under a baking sun.

Most have come a long way from the times when they practised in the streets or on wasteland, hoping to be noticed. "In the neighbourhood, football is just a game with friends," said 16-year-old

academy member Magloire Nongo. "But for me, football is all my life."

It is the club's popularity that keeps the academy from closing, for the moment. It plans to recruit new pupils this year and expects 6,000 applications for the 15 spots up for grabs. "Each time we have to filter out the men with beards who say they are only 13," said Johan Curbilie, one of the coaches. "Or they come pressing the case for their own star, even if the kid has only one leg," Curbilie joked.

When Mazembe play, the stadium is packed with about 18,000 people. In a recent game against CF Mounana of Gabon, the team featured Arsene Zola, 20, the first academy graduate to force his way into the first team. Twelve academy pupils have left to become professionals.

Zola is 1.8 metres tall, (five feet 11.5 inches) and comes from a poor family but is humbled at his success. "I am so

happy and moved by what has happened, it doesn't come like that for all the youngsters," he said.

Tout Puissant Mazembe vice president, Malta David Forrest, a Belgian, says the academy players have to be encouraged despite their lack of experience. "They are a real source of wealth for the club, the province and the country," he said.

After taking over the club, Katumbi brought in some of Africa's best players to help Mazembe live up to its name. Some were earning tens of thousands of dollars a month, when the average salary for a Congolese player is between 100 and 200 dollars a month.

The academy plays have their skills refined but must also do French and other lessons. "Our job is to educate them. We have to train their feet and their heads," said Curbilie. The teenagers have to be in bed by 9:00pm. "We make them eat fruit and vegetables and they cannot watch just anything they want on television," added the teacher. "It's tough for these boys to be trained at European standards."

The academy aims to have half of its pupils become professionals – a success rate way above rivals in Europe. Prince Kasongo, 16, proudly showed off the medals on the walls of his grandparents' house where he was raised. "I want to work hard to get them out of this poverty one day," he said. Kasongo travelled for the first time to France and Spain with the academy side in 2015.

"I am very proud to have a grandson who is going to become a star," responded his grandfather, Jean-Marcel Ngoie, 70. "He is a model, and tomorrow or later, there will be another Prince who will follow him." Amid the deserted buildings on Katumbi's property, Regis Laguesse tries to remain upbeat. "There are already a lot of the players from the second year who are better than those in the first. And now those in the third are even better," he said, while giving orders to the gardener to cut the grass waiting to be trampled by the studs of Africa's future football stars.

SPOTLIGHT

Germany duo braced for tough semi with Mexico

AFP
Sochi, Russia

Germany's Premier League stars Emre Can and Shkodran Mustafi expect a tough battle against Mexico in tomorrow's Confederations Cup semi-final as the world champions chase more silverware in Russia.

Liverpool midfielder Can and Arsenal defender Mustafi have just over 30 international appearances between them, yet are senior figures in a young Germany squad.

Despite resting nearly all of their World Cup winners and bringing an inexperienced side to Russia, Germany's young guns won Group B and face Mexico at Sochi's Fischt stadium for a place in Sunday's Confed Cup final.

Juan Carlos Osorio's Mexicans had to come from behind in all three of their Group A games, drawing 2-2 with Portugal, then beating both New Zealand and Russia by the same 2-1 margin. Mustafi – one of only three 2014 World Cup winners in Russia – says Germany's young guns are relishing their clash against Mexico's come-back kings.

"Mexico remind me a bit of Chile, it's a team which is very aggressive and can play very varied football," said the 25-year-old Arsenal centre-back.

"They are very organised in defence, experienced players and we'll need to be patient. We have to find a way to disrupt them and, a bit like us, they have no superstars."

Mustafi was left on the bench for Sunday's 3-1 win over Cameroon, but is set to feature in a



Germany's midfielder Shkodran Mustafi speaks to the press in Sochi yesterday. (AFP)

three-man defence against Mexico. Can has featured in all three matches so far in Russia and says the Germans must play to their strengths.

"We'll be well prepared for this game, everyone is looking forward to it," said the 23-year-old. "They are an uncomfortable opponent, similar to Chile. They have very flexible players in a technically strong team, it won't be easy. But we have no reason to hide, because we have a strong team. No one had expected much from us, but the quality is up there. Even if we have never played together before, a lot of things are already working well."

With World Cup winners Sami Khedira and Toni Kroos left at home, Can sees this tournament as his chance to stamp his claim for a place in Germany's midfield at next year's World Cup in Russia.

SAILING

New Zealand win America's Cup in emphatic fashion

- Burling becomes youngest helmsman to win the Cup
- New Zealand avenge San Francisco defeat in 2013



New Zealand helmsman Peter Burling takes his boat to the finish line to defeat Oracle Team USA in race nine to win the America's Cup.

Reuters
Hamilton, Bermuda

New Zealand lifted the America's Cup on Monday, almost white-washing the US holders with a revolutionary boat and a new superstar sailor avenging a humbling defeat four years ago.

New Zealand claimed international sport's oldest trophy with a stunning 7-1 victory in Bermuda's Great Sound, with 26-year-old Peter Burling becoming the youngest helmsman to secure sailing's biggest prize.

In doing so, Burling usurped New Zealand's nemesis, Oracle Team USA skipper Jimmy Spithill, who won the cup in 2010 aged 30 and was hoping for a third successive victory.

Larry Ellison, the billionaire Oracle founder, dressed in Oracle Team USA kit, came ashore from his boat to greet both teams after a fascinating battle of wits and technology.

But the focus was on Olympic champion Burling, who showered his jubilant team mates and support crew with champagne after their sleek black, red and white catamaran crossed the line.

"We're all ecstatic about what we have managed to achieve and we are on top of the world, it's going to be a good night," Burling said after coolly steering his space-age 50-foot (15 metre) foiling catamaran to yet another win over Spithill.

"They really were a class above in this America's Cup... They outsailed us and had a better boat... really well done," Spithill said, later adding that there were many things his team would have done differently.

Spithill, one of the world's most successful sailors, said it was too soon to say what he or the US team would do next.

The America's Cup, named after the schooner "America" which won it off the south coast of England in 1851, has only been held by teams from the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Switzerland.

New Zealand won the right to take on the US by beating four other "challengers" from Britain, France, Japan and Sweden, using cycling sailors dubbed "cyclors" to provide pedal power to control their catamaran's vast "wing" sail and hydrofoils.

The Kiwis will now decide where, when and in what type of boat the next America's Cup will be held and there have been

questions over whether they will opt for high-octane catamarans, or revert to the monohulls used in previous cups.

CEO Grant Dalton did not detail his plans, but told a media briefing they would "play out in the next couple of weeks".

One certainty for the other teams thinking of the next campaign is that Italy's Luna Rossa, which is backed by the Italian luxury goods group Prada, has been chosen as the Challenger of Record for the 36th America's Cup.

"The Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron... has accepted a challenge from Circolo della Vela Sicilia," Dalton said.

The New Zealand crew had been on a mission to wipe out the hurt inflicted when an 8-1 lead was overhauled by the US team.

New Zealand skipper Glenn Ashby, who has a low-key but critical role "trimming" the giant wing with a games console-type device, was the only member of the crew defeated in 2013 in this year's winning combination.

"Relief to right the wrongs of the last campaign," Ashby said when asked how he felt.

Burling, who won Olympic gold last year in the 49er skiff class with fellow

crew member Blair Tuke, has exuded a disarming calm and has now won a place in yachting history.

He has also brought a youthful confidence to New Zealand's rejuvenated campaign to regain the "Auld Mug", which Ashby called "this bloody trophy" in his victory speech.

Many have put New Zealand's triumph down to the revolutionary "cycling" system developed to power the hydraulics needed to control the catamaran's foils, which lift it out of the water, and the vast "wing" sail which drives it along.

Their "cyclors", including an Olympic cycling medalist, have kept their heads down throughout the contest, pedalling furiously to provide enough oil in the system to allow the boat to perform almost balletic pirouette manoeuvres on the water.

The sight of the boats skimming over the crystal clear waters of the natural sailing "arena" has drawn new audiences for sailing both in Bermuda and on television.

New Zealanders, in their uniform of black shirts and red socks, feted the victors with flags and cheers as Burling, Ashby and the team lifted the ornate silver trophy, which they later paraded triumphantly back to their base.

ATHLETICS

No regrets as Farah calls time on track racing



Mo Farah of Great Britain.

AFF
Ostrava, Czech Republic

British distance running legend Mo Farah said yesterday he had no regrets about calling time on his glittering track career to focus on road racing.

The four-time Olympic gold medalist will race his last 10,000m on the IAAF circuit at the Golden Spike meet in the northeastern Czech city of Ostrava today.

Then comes an outing at the London Diamond League over 3000m, followed by a training camp in southern France to fine-tune preparations for August 4-13 World Athletics Championships.

It is no exaggeration to say Farah has successfully overcome Kenyan and Ethiopian team tactics to dominate the 5000 and 10,000m.

Since winning silver over 10k at the 2011 world champs in Daegu, the 34-year-old Londoner has enjoyed an unbroken streak of nine global final wins (the 5,000m in 2011, and the double at the 2012 and 2016 Olympics and the 2013 and 2015 worlds).

"It's a little bit sad because obviously track is where I made it, where it changed my life in terms of competing at London Olympic Games and winning the double and continuing from there," Farah said of his decision to step away from the track.

"It's been an amazing journey for me but I have to move on now, everything must come to an end at some point.

"I'm a little bit sad but at the same time I think I have some unfinished business on the road."

Farah said he was looking forward to performing in front of home fans in the British capital for the worlds, with the longer aim to return to London from his Oregon training camp.

"It's better to end it on a high.

If London goes as well as I want and everything goes perfect, you won't see me on the track, you might see me do some crazy events, but in terms of 5,000 and 10,000 I'll call it a day," Farah said.

The Somali-born runner, who spent his early years in Djibouti before moving to Britain at the age of eight, said that a decision to take part in the marathon at Tokyo 2020 Olympics was not the most pressing item on his agenda.

"It's really different training for marathon than the track," he said.

"When I finish track I'd like to be able to sit back a bit, do a few marathons to get used to it and then after that make a decision.

"To be honest, sometimes I do feel like maybe I'll run a few marathons and call it a day, it depends on how motivated I am."

Farah added: "I do miss my family, I do miss spending a lot of time with them. I've seen them grow so fast and it really hurts me sometimes, to not be able to go to parents' evenings at their schools, not being able to be part of my family because I'm away for six months (every year) and that's always a challenge for me."

SPOTLIGHT

Van Niekerk vows to get 'ridiculous'

AFF
Ostrava, Czech Republic

South African track sensation Wayde van Niekerk vowed to get "ridiculous" when he competes in the little-run 300m at today's Golden Spike meet in Ostrava.

The world and Olympic 400m champion, who broke Michael Johnson's long-standing world record when winning gold in Rio, said he would do everything to break the meeting record set by his role model Usain Bolt, back in 2010.

The world record of 30.85sec, set at altitude in Pretoria in 2000 by Johnson, is seconded by Bolt's 30.97, with van Niekerk third in the rankings, having run 31.03 in Kingston last year.

"I've had a few good runs this season so far," said the 24-year-old. "I've been moving quite quick in the 100 and 200m, but I've still got quite a lot of world to do to get fit for the 300 and 400m. This is another stepping stone to see where I'm lying at the moment.

"We want to grow, do better and break records. I'll give it my all and try to improve my time."

Van Niekerk added: "It's not really an official event, so I'm going to go out there and be ridiculous tomorrow, I've got nothing to lose.

"It's the only 300m of the year... I'll try and give you a show.

"It's a massive test. I'm going to have to go out there and push myself a bit to feel where

I'm lying so if I don't make it to the finish line I hope there'll be someone there to pick me up!"

Bolt backed Van Niekerk, the first athlete to break 10sec for the 100m, 20sec for the 200m and 44sec for the 400m, for great things, describing the South African as desperate to get one over him.

"It's always an experience and something I really enjoyed doing," the Jamaican said of racing the 300m.

"Wayde definitely wants to run faster than me so he can have something to brag about!"

"He's in good shape, I see him running the 200m in 19sec, he ran a personal best over the 100m, that shows he's in good shape.

"After running the world record last year, I definitely think he has a chance" of beating the meet record.

Bolt added: "We're really pretty cool. Wayde's a chilled guy and he works hard. He's a person who doesn't complain at all, which is shocking... even when his coach kills him with a hard programme, which shows the determination and dedication that he has towards what he wants.

"He's a really cool guy, very level-headed and he will be one of the best in the sport, without any doubt."

Van Niekerk was equally full of praise for the eight-time Olympic gold medalist, saying: "Usain Bolt is someone that I can learn from and when there's advice needed from him now and then, I pop in to ask him how he's doing."

BADMINTON

Shuttler Srikanth now eyes World Championship

IAN S
Hyderabad

After winning two back-to-back Superseries titles, Indian shuttler Kidambi Srikanth has now set his eyes on the upcoming World Championship in August.

Srikanth, who returned home yesterday after bagging the Indonesian and Australian Open titles, said his focus is on the World Championship in the coming six weeks and he would not play any other tournament.

Proudly displaying the medals, the World No. 11 said the last two weeks have been fantastic for Indian badminton.

He also thanked India's chief



national coach Pullela Gopichand, his other coaches and the physio for his success.

"My special thanks to Gopichand sir. Without him I would not have been here for sure. I can't

imagine playing badminton at this level without him," said the 24-year-old.

Srikanth, who became only the fifth player in the world to reach three successive Superseries finals, did not single out any particular match when asked which was the toughest.

"Every match was tough," said the shuttler, who defeated reigning Olympic and World Champion Chen Long of China in Australian Open final on Sunday.

Srikanth said the new Badminton Association of India (BAI) President, Himanta Biswa Sarma, had been very kind and supportive from the day he took over.

Srikanth, along with two other shuttlers H.S. Prannoy and Sai Praneeth, were felicitated by

Gopichand Badminton Academy and Hyderabad District Badminton Association President Chamundeswarnath.

"These two weeks were fantastic not just for me but also for Prannoy and Sai. It was an unfortunate semi-final for Prannoy at the Indonesian Open. I would have loved to play the final with him," said Srikanth.

Prannoy shocked defending champion Lee Chong Wei of Malaysia in the pre-quarter-final and defeated Chen Long in the quarter-final but went down fighting to Japan's Kazumasa Sakai in the semi-final.

Srikanth was presented with prize money of Rs 3 lakh for his Indonesia Open win and another identical amount for his Australian Open feat by IDBI Federal.

NBA

Thunder's Westbrook claims MVP award after historic season

'It was an amazing season for me but without these guys none of it would have been possible'

AFP
New York

Oklahoma City's Russell Westbrook, who became only the second player in NBA history to average a triple double for an entire season, was named the NBA Most Valuable Player on Monday at the inaugural NBA Awards show.

Westbrook defeated fellow finalists James Harden of Houston and Kawhi Leonard of San Antonio to claim the season MVP award for the first time in ceremonies at New York.

The 28-year-old guard who helped the Americans win 2012 London Olympic gold averaged a league-high 31.6 points plus 10.7 rebounds and 10.4 assists a game, matching Oscar Robertson from 1962 with double digits in three statistical categories for a full season.

"To everybody in Oklahoma City who helped me go out every night and compete at a high level, I thank you for that," said Westbrook, who invited teammates on stage with him.

"It was an amazing season for me but without these guys none of it would have been possible. This award is not for me. It's for all of us."

Westbrook thanked "all my fans all across the world who appreciate me" and cried as he thanked his wife and parents.

"I couldn't do none of this without you guys," he said. "I can't say thank you enough."

Westbrook also won awards for best style and from fans for the game winner of the year.

Greek star Giannis Antetokoumpo of the Milwaukee Bucks won the Most Improved Player award, beating out Gobert and Serbian forward Nikola Jokic of the Denver Nuggets.

Another Bucks standout, Milwaukee guard Malcolm Brogdon, won Rookie of the Year honors and thanked his teammates.

"They believe in me," he said. "They have given me tremendous opportunity... This is a testament to guys who get overlooked. You can always achieve your dreams if you have faith and you sacrifice."

Cameron center Joel Embiid and Croatia's Dario Saric, both with Philadelphia, were losing



Oklahoma City Thunder player Russell Westbrook poses with his 2017 NBA most valuable player award during the 2017 NBA Awards at Basketball City at Pier 36. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

finalists for the top newcomer award. Golden State forward Draymond Green was voted the Defensive Player of the Year, defeating co-finalists Leonard and French center Rudy Gobert of the Utah Jazz.

"This isn't an individual award," Green said. "There are five guys on the floor every time. I can't do this all by myself so I appreciate them."

Golden State's Bob Myers was named Executive of the Year.

Houston Rockets guard Eric Gordon was named the NBA's top reserve player, taking the Sixth Man Award.

"We just had an unbelievable year," Gordon said. "I would like to thank my teammates and my coaches for making my job easy this year."

Houston's Mike D'Antoni was named Coach of the Year over San Antonio's Gregg Popovich and Miami's Erik Spoelstra.

"This is the ultimate team

award," D'Antoni said. "You do not win this alone."

Nowitzki named top teammate

German star Dirk Nowitzki of Dallas was named Teammate of the Year in voting by players, the 39-year-old forward expected to be back with the Mavericks next season. "My teammates are there to support me and push me and motivate me," said Nowitzki. "I still enjoy to compete. Hope-

fully, I'll be around a couple more years."

Other fan-voted awards went to Leonard for block of the year, Golden State's Klay Thompson for performance of the year in a 60-point effort, Golden State's Kevin Durant for best playoff moment for a 3-pointer in game three of the NBA Finals, Golden State's Stephen Curry and Green for assist of the year and Oklahoma City's Victor Oladipo for dunk of the year.

CYCLING/TOUR DE FRANCE

Cavendish targets Merckx record

AFP
Paris

British road cycling star Mark Cavendish will target Eddy Merckx's Tour de France record of stage wins as he spearheads the Dimension Data team's challenge despite an illness-plagued season.

The sprint king is just four wins away from equalling Tour great Merckx's record of 34 stage wins. The 32-year-old has raced little this year due to glandular fever but said the lure of the Tour was too great to consider skipping the world's most prestigious race.

"As has been widely reported, it's been a difficult few months for me on the back of the illness that set me back earlier on in the season," said the 30-time Tour stage winner.

"Despite this setback and my lack of race time I've worked incredibly hard both to ensure I could firstly recover from the illness as well as then aiming to build my fitness up as much as possible in order to start the Tour.

"If I am being totally honest, had this not been the Tour de France we may have collectively taken a different approach with regards to my inclusion but I feel that I owe it to myself, the team, our sponsors and most importantly to the Tour itself given its history and everything that it stands for - as

well as the emotional attachment I have for it - to give it my best and to put everything I have in to trying to help the team."

Cavendish enjoyed something of a renaissance last year, winning four Tour stages for his African team - his best return since claiming five stages in 2011. Since then he'd been pushed into the shade by German pair Marcel Kittel and Andre Greipel, but he left both trailing in his wake last year as they could win only one stage each.

Cavendish has however just one stage win this year in the Tour of Abu Dhabi in February and was sidelined with glandular fever for three months before only returning to competition in mid-June.

He will be joined in the Dimension Data team by two-time British time-trial champion Stephen Cummings.

The 36-year-old has focused on the three-week French race in recent years and has stage wins in each of the past two editions. This year's tour starts in the German city of Duesseldorf on Saturday.

Dimension Data team

Mark Cavendish (GBR), Edvald Boasson Hagen (NOR), Stephen Cummings (GBR), Bernhard Eisel (AUT), Reinardt Janse van Rensburg (RSA), Serge Pauwels (BEL), Mark Renshaw (AUS), Scott Thwaites (GBR), Jaco Venter (RSA)



British cycling star Mark Cavendish

Quick Step team for Tour de France announced

In-form Belgian Philippe Gilbert, German sprint ace Marcel Kittel and Ireland's Dan Martin lead Quick Step's assault on the Tour de France, which starts on Saturday. Alongside this trio in Quick Step's team announced yesterday were Zdenek Stybar and Matteo Trentin with all five having already enjoyed stage success on the Tour. Ireland's Martin, nephew of Stephen Roche who won the Tour de France and Giro d'Italia in 1987, has had an impressive

season so far coming second in two classics and third at the Tour warm up Criterium. Making his debut in cycling's blue riband is Italian Gianluca Brambilla while Quick Step's Julian Alaphilippe misses the race with a knee injury.

Quick Step team: Philippe Gilbert (BEL), Jack Bauer (NZL), Gianluca Brambilla (ITA), Marcel Kittel (GER), Dan Martin (IRL), Fabio Sabatini (ITA), Zdenek Stybar (CZE), Matteo Trentin (ITA), Julien Vermote (BEL)

MLB

Yankees win game, lose Castro to strained hamstring

By Pete Caldera

The Record (Hackensack, N.J.)

For about six weeks, Starlin Castro had played through an aching right wrist - finally sitting on Sunday to allow a cortisone shot to do its work.

Castro was back in the Yankees' lineup on Monday night, but not for long.

One of the game's most durable players, Castro was forced out of Monday's game with a strained right hamstring, creating a further strain on the Yankees' injury-plagued roster.

A stint on the 10-day disabled list seemed assured for Castro, who was in the trainer's room as the Yankees held on for a 6-5 win against the White Sox before 20,339 fans at Guaranteed Rate Field. Tyler Wade, being groomed for an all-purpose role, is expected to be called up from Class AAA Scranton/Wilkes-Barre to take Castro's spot.

Though the Yankees had a five-run lead to start the ninth, Aroldis Chapman was summoned for the final two outs after Tim Anderson's three-run homer off Chase Shreve.

Chapman gave up an RBI double to Jose Abreu before getting Avisail Garcia on a grounder and getting Todd Frazier on a fly ball to end it.

Rookie lefty Jordan Montgomery proved steady again, tossing seven strong innings and keeping the Yankees (40-33) atop the AL East while the AL Central's last place White Sox (32-43) bumbled their way to a fourth-straight loss.

But the loss of Castro - in the midst of a potential All-Star season - is especially tough for a Yankee team that just placed Aaron Hicks (right oblique) on the DL, and is still operating without starter CC Sabathia (strained hamstring), reliever Adam Warren (shoulder inflammation) and the can't-get-started Greg Bird (bruised right ankle).

After a month on the concussion DL, Jacoby Ellsbury returned to the Yankees' lineup on Monday night and scored twice as the Yankees chased lefty starter David Holmberg during a three-run sixth.

Castro, who started 72 of the Yanks' first 74 games, exited with the White Sox leading 1-0 in the third. Batting second in the lineup, Castro seemed



New York Yankees first baseman Tyler Austin hits a solo home run during the sixth inning against the Chicago White Sox at Guaranteed Rate Field. PICTURE: USA TODAY Sports

to have a sure infield hit with a dribbler toward third base. But Todd Frazier barehanded the ball and threw out Castro, who began

pulling up a few feet from first base. A moment later, Castro was being helped off the field by head athletic trainer Steve Do-

nohue and manager Joe Girardi.

Just recalled from Class AAA Scranton/Wilkes-Barre in a series of early Monday transac-

RESULTS

Indians.....	15	Rangers.....	9
Red Sox.....	4	Twins.....	1
Yankees.....	6	White Sox.....	5
Cubs.....	5	Nationals.....	4
Angels.....	4	Dodgers.....	0
Giants.....	9	Rockies.....	2
Cardinals.....	8	Reds.....	2
Diamondbacks.....	6	Phillies.....	1

single to left, and a Ronald Torreyes sac fly made it 3-1, though Headley was erased on the bases for the final out.

Austin's one-out, solo homer in the sixth off Holmberg (1-2) was his first since being recalled on Saturday to replace Chris Carter, who was designated for assignment. But two more White Sox errors led to two more Yankees runs in the sixth.

Ellsbury reached on Holmberg's bobble, moved to third on Headley's double off the center field wall and scored on a Romine sac fly after a tough at-bat. And when first baseman Matt Davidson dropped shortstop Tim Anderson's throw from shortstop on a Torreyes grounder, Headley scored from third to make it 6-1.

Torreyes played shortstop as Didi Gregorius received a day of rest against a lefty starter.

Montgomery (6-4) gave up just a Frazier leadoff homer in the second, yielding five hits and a walk and striking out eight batters. The AL East was separated by five games as Monday's play began, but "we felt it'd be a very tough division, a tight division the whole way through," Girardi said. "And it's kind of living up to that."

tions, Rob Refsnyder replaced Castro at second base. Entering the game, Castro learned he was second among AL second basemen in the All-Star voting, trailing only Houston's Jose Altuve.

Castro is the Yankees' team leader with 29 multi-hit games this year, and his 92 hits ranked him tied for second in the AL as Monday's play began, and his .315 batting average was seventh best in the league. Having lost 10 of their previous 12 games and six straight road games entering Monday night, the Yankees began clawing back during a three-run fourth inning.



SPOTLIGHT

All Black Kaino denies intent to hurt Murray

AFP
Wellington

All Black Jerome Kaino yesterday rejected allegations he maliciously targeted British and Irish Lions scrum-half Conor Murray and predicted a backlash from the tourists after their first Test loss.

Lions coach Warren Gatland said after the 30-15 defeat that players were recklessly diving at Murray in a dangerous manner that could cause a career-ending injury.

The comments, dismissed as "desperate" by All Blacks coach Steve Hansen, put Kaino under the spotlight as he crashed into Murray early in the game while the Irishman was kicking.

The flanker said he was trying to disrupt Murray's kick "but my timing was off and I rolled into his planted foot".

"What's been said out there about malice and intention to hurt anyone, that's never the case," he told reporters after being peppered with questions about the incident.

The 79-Test veteran said he played hard but "within the rules and the spirit of the game".

Asked if he had seen the incident since Saturday, he replied: "It's popped up on my Twitter feed about a mn times, so it's a bit hard to avoid."

He said the furore sparked by Gatland's comments had not affected the All Blacks as the world champions prepared for the second Test in Wellington on Saturday.

"I don't think it bothers us what's going on outside of our circle," he said.

Two-time World Cup winner Kaino said the Lions would be hurting and desperate to respond after the loss in Auckland, where their vaunted forward pack failed to meet expectations

"Their team meetings and training will have a lot of edge and lot of emotion... so we need to make sure that we turn the screw a lot more in our sessions and expect a backlash from the Lions on the weekend," he said.

No sulking

All Blacks assistant coach Ian Foster said Gatland's comments were just part of the hype in the lead-up to a big Test.

He said both sides tried to pressure kickers and "to take it any further than that is just a bit silly".

Foster, a former Waikato teammate of Gatland's, said the All Blacks were used to visiting coaches taking potshots in a bid to put the hosts off their stride.

"We don't take it as personal, it's just what some people do," he said.

"If we start sulking about that then we're going to get upset and distracted and isn't that the ob-

jective of it?

"So we've just got to stay in our own mind really clear and focused about what we do and remember... it's about a game of rugby on Saturday and we have to be ready."

Foster admitted the needling could sometimes go too far, referring specifically to a New Zealand Herald cartoon depicting Gatland as a clown.

"I wouldn't like that," he said. A similar cartoon of Michael Cheika last year enraged the Wallabies coach, who accused New Zealand Rugby of being behind it.

Foster said he and Gatland would forget any differences after the third and final Test in Auckland early next month and relax over a drink.

"We'll go hammer and tongs at each other but at the end of the third Test hopefully we'll sit down and have a beer together and a yack about it," he said.



RUGBY

Lions Test hopefuls blow it as Hurricanes snatch 31-31 draw

'It's very frustrating to have given up a lead twice. It'll be the last game (of tour) for a lot of us'

AFP
Wellington

The British and Irish Lions squandered a 16-point lead as the Wellington Hurricanes roared back to snatch a 31-31 draw and dent the Test prospects of several touring players yesterday.

The Lions leaked four second-half tries and then missed a drop-goal attempt after the siren as they threw away a commanding position against the Super Rugby champions.

It wasn't the result the Lions wanted in their final tour match as coach Warren Gatland looks for reinforcements for this week's second Test after Saturday's defeat to the All Blacks.

There were some bright spots, with Tommy Seymour scoring two tries on the right wing and George North one on the left, although Gatland's Test focus will be on the forwards.

Lock Courtney Lawes excelled, along with hard-running number eight CJ Stander.

Iain Henderson also played well but marred his Test hopes when he was sin-binned for a dangerous tackle, allowing the Hurricanes back into the game in a thrilling finale.

"It's very frustrating to have given up a lead twice," said Lions captain Rory Best, adding: "It'll be the last game (of the tour) for a lot of us."

"But we'll make sure that we knuckle down, roll up the sleeves and whoever's lucky enough to play in the last two games we'll make they're well prepared and ready to win the game on Saturday."

Niggle factor

In what may be a taste of things to come in the second Test, it was an often bad-tempered encounter featuring plenty of off-the-ball niggle.

The match in front of a 39,000 sell-out crowd in the New Zealand capital started brightly, with both sides throwing the ball around. A Dan Biggar penalty put the Lions ahead but the Hurricanes looked threatening on the wing as Julian Savea went on the charge.

Just as they were building pressure and looked poised to score, Lions scrum-half Greg Laidlaw intercepted an Otere Black pass and pinned his ears back. He was run down just over the halfway line but offloaded to fellow Scot Seymour, who dotted down between the posts, with Biggar adding the conversion and another penalty.

Flanker Callum Gibbins hit



Wellington Hurricanes' Wes Goosen scores a try during the rugby match against the British and Irish Lions in Wellington yesterday. (AFP)

back with a pick-and-go try as the Hurricanes outmuscled the Lions defence, but the visitors kept the scoreboard ticking over with another Biggar penalty.

North then scored their second try when the Hurricanes failed to claim a Biggar high ball and Henderson flicked it into the path of the giant Welsh winger.

The Hurricanes pressured the Lions with a lineout drive as half-time approached, but this time the defence held to send them into the break up 23-7.

A perfectly timed Savea pass set up fellow All Black Ngani Laumape for a try seconds after the restart and a Jordie Barrett penalty narrowed the gap to 23-17. The Lions patiently worked the ball forward after Wellington scrum-half Te Toiroa Tahuriorangi was sinbinned for a high tackle, then sent it out wide for Seymour to score his second.

But the Hurricanes replied with tries to Wes Goosen and Vaea Fifita after Henderson's yellow card, locking up the scores at 31-all and setting up a barnstorming final 10 minutes.

The Hurricanes worked the ball through 23 phases but could not find a way through, and then Biggar's attempted drop goal fell short to end the match in a draw.

'Orange' Yellow. Penalty. Coaches disagree over Henderson's card

Wellington Hurricanes coach Chris Boyd thought opposing lock Iain Henderson's tackle on Jordie Barrett deserved an "orange" card, while his British and Irish Lions counterpart Warren Gatland reckoned it warranted just a penalty. Both, however, agreed the incident when Henderson upended Barrett in a midfield ruck in the 65th minute was the major talking point of their 31-31 draw yesterday. The Hurricanes were trailing 31-17 at the time and scored tries through Wes Goosen and Vaea Fifita, both of which Barrett converted, to lock the score up while Henderson was off the field. "I was a bit horrified when I was listening to the mike and he (referee Romain Poite) was talking about nothing," Boyd told reporters. "Clearly he (Barrett) was tipped beyond the horizontal and the starting point for that is yellow.

"The penalty around that I understand is where you land, it has nothing to do with intent. "It was probably an orange in my mind so somewhere between a yellow and a red." Gatland, who did not address the fact his side scored eight points while Hurricanes scrumhalf Te Toiroa Tahuriorangi was sinbinned in the second half, had a different interpretation. "Disappointed we ended up with a yellow card," he said. "The referee was initially going to give it as a penalty but he made the decision to look at other angles and changed his decision to a yellow card.

"It was the big moment of the game. It was going to be a penalty to us and we had all the territory and possession so it was a massive swing in the

game." With Henderson off the field, the home side came roaring back and after Goosen and Fifita's tries, with the 38,690-strong crowd urging the 2016 Super Rugby champions on, they pressed hard to try to score the winning try.

The Lions, however, managed to hold them out and had the opportunity to win the game only for flyhalf Dan Biggar to miss his drop goal attempt.



British and Irish Lions player Iain Henderson (L) is yellow carded by the referee for a dangerous tackle on Wellington Hurricanes' Jordie Barrett during their rugby union match in Wellington yesterday. (AFP)

GOLF

Nicklaus says Tiger faces tough road back: report

AFP
Potomac, United States

Tiger Woods will miss this week's PGA National, skipping his usual host role while continuing treatments to manage pain medications after an impaired driving arrest last month, tournament officials said on Monday.

The former world number one, whose charity foundation stages the event, was arrested May 29 near his Florida home for impaired driving. A breathalyser test showed no sign of alcohol but police video showed Woods struggling to answer questions.

Woods later said he did not realise how prescription drugs might interact and last week said he had sought treatment to cope with medications to ease back pain and sleep issues.

"I'm currently receiving professional help to manage my medications and the ways that I deal with back pain and a sleep disorder," Woods tweeted.

Tournament officials confirmed that Woods, 41, would not attend the National due to ongoing treatment. The 14-time major winner will be updated about the event during the week.

Woods has only played the National twice since 2012 because of injuries and was not slated to be in the field this year.

In April, Woods announced he had undergone his fourth back operation since 2014 to ease back and leg pain and would miss the remainder of the season.

Woods made his comeback last December in the Bahamas but has played only twice this year, missing the cut at Torrey

Pines and withdrawing from a European Tour event in Dubai last February. Woods, whose 79 career PGA wins are three shy of Sam Snead's all-time record, has not won a major title since the 2008 US Open and has not won any event since the 2013 World Golf Championships Bridgestone Invitational.

Top players have supported Woods as he fights to return after a mug shot seen around the world and years of struggles with back pain.

"I think we all want him to do what's best for him," world number three Jordan Spieth said last week.

"We all want him to be better. We want him to be healthy and we want him to be back out here. So whatever needs to happen for that to happen he knows and I'm sure he's doing it."

World number four Rory McIlroy has offered his support to Woods in his latest fightback bid.

"It's a tough one," McIlroy said last week. "I reached out to him whenever everything broke a few weeks ago and just making sure he was OK. He's OK. He has gone through a rough time the last few years with injuries and being in pain and not being able to sleep. I totally understand how that can happen.

"So it's good that he's getting help. It's good that he's on the road to recovery... he has felt an outpouring of love over the past few weeks after all this happened and he really appreciates that."

Woods said as much last week, tweeting, "I want to thank everyone for the amazing outpouring of support and understanding, especially the fans and players on tour."



Springboks skipper Whiteley out for two months

South Africa captain Warren Whiteley faces up to two months on the sidelines with a pelvis injury, ruling him out of the rest of the Super Rugby season and possibly the opening matches of the Rugby Championship, his team said yesterday.

Whiteley was appointed Springbok captain for the three-test tour by France this month and looked an inspired choice as South Africa won the first two tests in convincing fashion. However, he was hurt in the build up to the third test and had to pull out of the team on the eve of last Saturday's victory in Johannesburg. The injury,

sustained in line out practice with the Boks, has now been confirmed as torn ligaments in the pelvis.

"We expect to rehabilitate him in six to eight weeks," Lions team doctor Rob Collins told reporters. It will come as a serious blow to the Lions' hopes of Super Rugby success as they are well on course for next month's quarter-finals. The 29-year-old Whiteley could also miss the start of the southern hemisphere Rugby Championship in August. South Africa start with two tests against Argentina, followed by matches against Australia and world champions New Zealand.

WIMBLEDON

Federer and Nadal primed for dream final reprise

'I'm motivated. Grass is not my speciality, but I'm very motivated'

Reuters
London

Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal have shared the Grand Slam spoils this year and it would take a hard heart not to hope for a fairytale rematch next month of their epic 2008 Wimbledon final.

Federer, 35, prevailed in their five-set battle in Australia to win a record-extending 18th Slam, but sat out the claycourt season in which Nadal, 31, made his own history by winning a 10th French Open title – 'La Decima' – and 15th Slam.

In 2008, Nadal was just 22. He survived two rain breaks and an enthralling Federer fightback to end the Swiss's five-year reign as Wimbledon champion to finally triumph 6-4, 6-4, 6-7 (5), 6-7 (8), 9-7 after defeats in the 2006 and 2007 finals.

The match, at four hours and 48 minutes, is still the longest final in Wimbledon history. It was hailed by pundits, players and fans alike, with seven-time Grand Slam champion John McEnroe describing it as the greatest match he'd ever seen.

The Wimbledon seedings, to be confirmed today, and Friday's draw will determine whether the titans could meet on Centre Court in the final of the tournament, which runs from July 3 to 16, for the first time since that tussle.

But for those who believe in omens, Nadal, then all pirate swagger with his long shorts, long hair and sleeveless shirts, won the 2008 Wimbledon title after annexing the French Open without dropping a set – a feat he repeated earlier in June.

"He'll go to Wimbledon with so much confidence. For me, he's favourite with Federer but Federer won't have the confidence of coming in as French Open champion," Mats Wilander, three-times French Open champion and Eurosport host, told Reuters.

Nadal, the world number two, pulled out of the traditional grasscourt warm-up tournament, the Aegon Championships at London's Queen's



In this July 6, 2008, picture, Rafael Nadal of Spain (right) and Roger Federer of Switzerland embrace after their final match at Wimbledon in London. Nadal had won 6-4, 6-4, 6-7 (5), 6-7 (8), 9-7. (Reuters)

Club, to rest up for his challenge for a third Wimbledon title while preparing in his native Mallorca.

'VERY MOTIVATED'

He missed Wimbledon last year with a wrist injury and since he lost to Novak Djokovic in the 2011 final, Nadal has had an underwhelming run, with each of his four subsequent visits ending in defeat to a player ranked 100 or lower.

Yet Nadal gave notice of his intent after winning in Paris. "I'm motivated. Grass is not my speciality, but I'm very motivated," he told reporters.

For his part, Federer, whose 2016 season came to an abrupt end after he lost in the Wimbledon semi-finals to runner-up Milos Raonic, made a sensational start to the year.

He prevailed in the 35th chapter of his rivalry with Nadal in January to clinch the Australian Open – his first Grand Slam title since Wimbledon in 2012 – before again trumping the Spaniard en route to claiming the Indian Wells and Miami titles.

That run defied logic as Federer had spent the last six months of 2016 on the sidelines recuperating from a knee injury that had required surgery earlier in the season.

He then gave the unforgiving Roland Garros courts a miss to focus on Wimbledon and the hardcourt swing.

While the grasscourt comeback for the seven-times Wimbledon champion faltered in the first round at Stuttgart, losing to German veteran Tommy Haas, Federer was imperious on Sun-

day as he won a ninth Halle title without dropping a set all week.

"I was doubting myself a little bit, I must admit, because losing (in the opening) round for the first time in 15 years on grass was always going to shake me a little bit and it did," Federer told the ATP men's tour website.

"So I'm happy to react right away and let that be forgotten and actually move on and remind myself I actually can play well on grass."

And if Federer also needs a talisman from the statistics books as he heads to London, how about the fact that in the years that he won his first four finals – 2004, 2005 and 2012 – he also went on to win Wimbledon?

Could the great man now do the same in 2017?

TENNIS / ATP ANTALYA OPEN

Thiem upset by lowly ranked Indian



AFP
Antalya, Turkey

Dominic Thiem crashed out of the Antalya ATP grass court tournament yesterday, the French Open semi-finalist stunned by India's Ramanathan Ramanathan, ranked 214 places below the world number eight.

The 22-year-old Ramanathan upset Thiem 6-3, 6-2 to claim the biggest win of his career.

Thiem made it into the French Open

last four, beating Novak Djokovic in straight sets in the quarter-finals before losing to eventual winner Rafael Nadal.

However, he arrived in Turkey after a second-round loss to Robin Haase last week on grass in Halle.

The Austrian was appearing in Turkey to help prepare for the third Grand Slam of the year at Wimbledon which starts on Monday.

Ramanathan had only played in one ATP tour event this year before heading to Turkey, and that was at home in Chennai in January.

TENNIS / AEGON INTERNATIONAL

Djokovic frustrated as rain rules at Eastbourne



AFP
London

Novak Djokovic's Wimbledon preparations were hampered yesterday as rain ruined his Eastbourne second round clash with Vasek Pospisil.

Djokovic took a wildcard entry into the Wimbledon warm-up event on the south-coast in a bid to ensure he is up to speed in time for the grass-court Grand Slam, which gets underway on Monday.

The 30-year-old crashed to a shock French Open quarter-final defeat against Dominic Thiem and has not won one of the four majors since last year at Roland Garros.

Djokovic has not played a competitive tournament between the French Open and Wimbledon since 2010, but the 12-time Grand Slam champion is desperate to find his form after a wretched run in 2017.

But the Serb was left kicking his

heels after the weather wrecked play yesterday.

When the former world number one took to the court at Devonshire Park he held serve at the start of the first set and was leading 30-15 in the second game, only for rain to start falling.

The showers never relented and play was called off until 0930 GMT today.

Meanwhile, Britain's Marcus Willis saw his bid to qualify for Wimbledon held up by rain at Roehampton.

Willis memorably faced Roger Federer on Centre Court in the Wimbledon second round last year after battling through the qualifying stages.

The 26-year-old, ranked 374 in the world, is trying to repeat that fairytale run, but his second qualifying round clash with compatriot Liam Broady yesterday was called off due to the bad weather.

Willis will have to try again today, with the winner facing Ilya Marchenko or Benjamin Becker for a place in the main draw at Wimbledon.

COMMENT

Men and women should play each other to solve Serena question, says McEnroe

John McEnroe has refused to apologise for saying that Serena Williams would be ranked around No. 700 in the men's game.

Williams, the holder of 23 Grand Slam singles titles, told McEnroe to "respect me and my privacy as I'm trying to have a baby" after he made the comments during an interview with NPR on Sunday. During the interview McEnroe stressed that Williams was the "best female player ever – no question" and added that a woman one day could be the best player on the planet.

Yesterday, McEnroe stood by his comments.

"I felt the need, however unfortunately, to defend myself and say what I really felt, which is about what I think she would be [in the men's rankings]," he told CBS's *This Morning*. "I've got a solution. Solve the problem, and I'm sure the men would be all for this – the men and women play together. And then we don't have to guess."

The 58-year-old added that he thinks he would be ranked around 1,200 in the world if he was playing on

the men's circuit today.

McEnroe, who won seven Grand Slam singles titles during his career, was bemused his comments had attracted so much attention.

"I didn't know it would create controversy. I've said this 1,000 times," he said.

"I don't want anything to go wrong with Serena because she's pregnant, I don't want to upset her. I think she's doing it tongue in cheek as well and I think deep down we're talking about something... I can't even believe we're talking about it."

Many believe making comparisons between men's and women's tennis does little for the game, something that Williams herself has touched upon in the past.

"For me, men's tennis and women's tennis are completely, almost, two separate sports," Williams said in 2013. "If I were to play Andy Murray, I would lose 6-0, 6-0 in five to six minutes, maybe 10 minutes. No, it's true. It's a completely different sport. The men are a lot faster and they serve harder, they hit harder, it's just a different game." (The Guardian)



Serena Williams won her 23rd Grand Slam title when she won the Australian Open in January this year. (AFP)

Murray suffers Wimbledon injury scare

Andy Murray suffered an injury scare ahead of Wimbledon as the world number one pulled out of an exhibition match at the Hurlingham Club due to a sore hip yesterday. Murray had scheduled two matches at the Aspal Tennis Classic event following his shock first round exit against Australian world number 90 Jordan Thompson at Queen's Club last week. The 30-year-old Scot had been due to face Lucas Pouille, but his management announced on Tuesday that he would not take to the court because his hip was "a bit sore". The decision was described as a precaution, with Murray still

planning to play the second match against an as-yet-unnamed opponent in west London on Friday. But it is not the preparation Murray would have wanted as the three-time Grand Slam champion prepares to defend his title at Wimbledon, which gets underway on Monday. Murray's difficult season has included a host of fitness problems, including shingles, an elbow injury and two bouts of flu.

Federer, Bencic to return to 2018 Hopman Cup

Roger Federer and Belinda Bencic will return to headline the 2018 Hopman Cup mixed teams event, officials confirmed yesterday. The Swiss pair

lit up last January's edition with sellout crowds for all three of their ties at the eight nation showpiece, with 13,917 fans turning out for the clash between Switzerland and France, the biggest tennis crowd in Western Australia. An additional 6,000 people at the Perth Arena watched a Federer training session as the 18-time grand slam winner played the event for the first time in 15 years. Bencic, 20, who once ranked seventh on the WTA, has been troubled by injury this season and is looking for a fresh 2018 start. "The Hopman Cup was amazing for me earlier this year, I enjoyed every second," the Swiss said. "Playing with Roger was obviously a dream come true and I learned so much from him during that week on and off court."



Slovakia's Dominika Cibulkova (left) shakes hands after losing to Britain's Heather Watson during their second round match at ATP Aegon International in Eastbourne, England, on Monday. Watson won 7-5, 6-4. (AFP)

CRICKET / WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

Sciver, Knight tons set up England's win over Pakistan

Hosts won by 107 runs through Duckworth-Lewis after rain halts Pakistan innings

A crowd of 2,169, largely made up of enthusiastic school kids, at Grace Road in Leicester for the ICC Women's World Cup 2017 game between England Women and Pakistan Women on a gloomy Tuesday, was treated to some special batting from Natalie Sciver and Heather Knight during the home team's 107-run win on DLS Method.

Sciver, who became the first woman to be given out by the Decision Review System on the tournament's opening day, continued her date with records with a 92-ball 137 that took England to 377 for 7. Having posted the second-highest team total in World Cup history, the home side then reduced Pakistan to 107 for 3 in 29.2 overs when rain arrived. Play was officially called off at 6:02pm local time, as England got in among the points after losing its opening fixture to India Women.

Sciver's 213-run stand in 30 overs with Knight (106 in 109 balls) - England's joint best third-wicket stand - was studded with 25 fours and three sixes. The assault from Sciver and Knight - both scored their maiden One-Day International centuries - as well as Danielle Wyatt (42 not out in 27) and Fran Wilson (33 in 19) underscored England's superiority. England hit a total of 44 fours and seven sixes. For perspective, New Zealand Women's 455 for 5 against Pakistan in January 1997 - the highest-ever total in ODIs, men's or women's - had 38 fours and two sixes.

Play started half an hour late because of a drizzle, and not long after that, Kainat Imtiaz trapped a shuffling Sarah Taylor in front of the wickets.

Imtiaz and Asmavia Iqbal were largely disciplined in the Power Play overs, and it resulted in Tammy Beaumont, dropped off the first ball of the match at first slip, edging Imtiaz to depart for 14. Sensing that another wicket could push England back, Sana Mir continued with the pacers until the 13th over. With Imtiaz and Iqbal tiring - the pacers bowled most of the 12 wides in the innings - the third breakthrough remained elusive even as the frequency of boundaries increased.

Spinners were always unlikely to be effective in these conditions, and Sciver and Knight knew that. Once Mir came to bowl the 14th over, the batters targeted the gaps in the outfield, and after the run rate went past six in the 27th over.

While the fifty partnership came in 55 balls, the century stand was up in 93 balls. The first signs of things to come were established in the 23rd over when Sciver hit Nashra Sandhu for four consecutive boundaries to cover, third man, long-off and square leg. Knight opened the sixes column in the 33rd over when she slog-swept Sandhu over the mid-wicket fence much to the delight of the kids chanting 'England... England!'



England's Natalie Sciver (right) runs a single to complete her century as teammate Heather Knight looks on during their Women's World Cup match against Pakistan in Leicester, England, yesterday. (Reuters)

Sciver reached her century in 76 balls - England's fastest in World Cups and second-fastest overall. Knight joined her partner with a boundary in the 39th over.

The two took a particular liking to Sandhu, who finished with figures of 10-0-82-0 - the most expensive spell in World Cups. Having conceded 78 in nine overs, Mir might have taken over that spot had she completed her quota.

The second shift in gears came in the 40th over after Iqbal had Knight caught at wish long-off against the run of play.

Sciver used the pace of the ball to hit three huge sixes, which could have crossed the fence in any ground. Even if wickets kept falling, England had enough in the tank to hit 100 runs in the last 10 overs, falling just one short of equalling its best-ever total of 378 for 5 - also against Pakistan, at home last June.

After the show of England's batting might, the focus shifted to the rain that was expected at 1:00pm local time. The weather, however, stayed good for just long enough for Katherine Brunt to put

her bad show against India behind and pick up two wickets, and Ayesha Zafar to record her highest score of 56 not out - Pakistan's main takeaway from the day. (ICC)

BRIEF SCORES: England Women 377 for 7 in 50 overs (Natalie Sciver 137, Heather Knight 106; Asmavia Iqbal 3-62, Kainat Imtiaz 2-68) **beat Pakistan Women 107 for 3 in 29.2 overs** (Ayesha Zafar 56 not out; Katherine Brunt 2-21) **by 107 runs by Duckworth-Lewis Method**

FOCUS

Shastri to apply for India coach, say reports

INANS
New Delhi

Former India skipper Ravi Shastri has reportedly decided to throw his hat into the ring as the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) hunts for the next India head coach following the controversial exit of leg-spin legend Anil Kumble.

Shastri had previously worked as India team director between 2014 and 2016, and guided the team to the semi-finals of the 50-over World Cup in 2015 and the ICC World T20 the following year.

Considered close to skipper Virat Kohli, the former all-rounder was replaced by Kumble, who was handed a one-year tenure till the recently-concluded 2017 ICC Champions Trophy.

But soon after taking India to the final of the Champions Trophy in London, Kumble decided against extending his tenure, stating that the "partnership" with Kohli was "untenable".

While the rift between Kohli and Kumble was out in the open after the former leg-spinner's

post on Twitter about his decision to walk away, the BCCI had dropped enough hints by advertising the post of head coach right before the start of the Champions Trophy.

While the BCCI has the likes of Virender Sehwag, Doda Ganesh, Richard Pybus, Lalchand Rajput and Tom Moody on its shortlist, the Indian cricket board has extended the deadline to receive applications for the head coach to July 9.

Shastri's return though will not be as easy as it appears, especially after his showdown with former India skipper Sourav Ganguly, one of the members of the BCCI's Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) last year.

Shastri's candidature was rejected last time, with Ganguly reasoning that the applicant for an important job like the India team coach must be present in person during the interview.

Shastri, on the other hand, had accused Ganguly of not being present when he had given his interview via Skype.

Master blaster Sachin Tendulkar and VVS Laxman are the other members of the BCCI's Cricket Advisory Committee.



Former player Ravi Shastri is considered close to skipper Virat Kohli.

SPOTLIGHT

Unemployment looms for Australia's cricketers: union

Reuters
Melbourne

More than 200 of Australia's top cricketers face unemployment within days, with a bitter pay dispute "extremely" unlikely to be resolved by a deadline on Friday, players' union boss Greg Dyer has said.

Australia's top cricketers face being locked out unless a new memorandum of understanding (MoU) is struck between Cricket Australia and the Australian Cricketers' Association (ACA), with the current agreement set to expire on June 30.

ACA president Dyer said players and Cricket Australia remained "a long way apart" on basic issues and the union was preparing its members for unemployment.

"It is extremely likely that as of July 1 we'll be jumping over the cliff together," Dyer told local media yesterday.

"The fundamentals of the deal are nowhere near to being resolved."

"Over 200 of Australia's most senior cricketers are unemployed as of the 1st of July."

"We will be assisting in whatever way we possibly can in that but they're unemployed."

At the heart of the dispute is a long-standing agreement that

gives the players a fixed percentage of the revenue of the game, a deal which CA says prevents them from sufficiently investing in the grassroots.

CA offered a revised deal on Friday but the union quickly rejected it.

Unless the impasse ends, the upcoming Australia A tour of South Africa, a two-Test series in Bangladesh and a limited-overs tour of India are under threat, with the Ashes also looming at the end of the year.

CA has declined to comment on the negotiations but said in announcing its revised offer last week that it was "100 percent committed" to resolving the MoU by the deadline.

Former Australia Test opener Ed Cowan, who is contracted for New South Wales state, said players remained unified and resolute in their demands, and cast doubt on Steve Smith's Test side boarding the plane for Bangladesh for the Test series starting Aug. 27.

"The next line in the sand is probably the tour of Bangladesh, do the players go on that late August?"

"My gut feeling is probably hit and miss for security reasons (and) MoU reasons."

The ACA has already made moves to prepare for a lockout, setting up a business to manage and market players' intellectual property.

APPOINTMENT

Nic Pothas is SL interim coach

AFP
Colombo

Sri Lanka yesterday placed the national cricket team in the charge of fielding coach Nic Pothas before finding a replacement for Graham Ford who prematurely ended his contract last week.

Sri Lanka Cricket chief Thilanga Sumathipala said the 43-year-old former South African wicketkeeper-batsman will be responsible for preparing the team for two upcoming tours by Zimbabwe and India.

"Nic has been with our team since August (as fielding coach) and he knows the players well," Sumathipala told AFP. "He is very good with the team and I am confident he can do a very good job."

Ford quit 15 months into his four-year contract, just two weeks after the team's early exit from the Champions Trophy this month.

The 56-year-old said in a statement after leaving Sri Lanka that he was ending his second stint with the team after a "decision arrived at mutually."

Sumathipala said Pothas was being considered for promotion as the permanent head coach while the cricket board had several expressions of interest from unidentified coaches to take up the job. Those interested in the high profile position were "Sri Lankans," he added.

Sri Lanka plays uncapped batsman against Zimbabwe

Sri Lanka yesterday named a 13-member squad, including a 19-year-old uncapped batsman, for the five-match one-day international series against Zimbabwe. Wanidu Hasaranga, who has played 12 first class matches and scored 775 runs, was brought into the squad led by skipper Angelo Mathews and Vice Captain Upul Tharanga. Zimbabwe begins their first tour of Sri Lanka in 15 years by playing the first one-day international Friday at the Galle International Stadium, which will host its first limited-overs match in 17 years. The last ODI at Galle was in June 2000, when Sri Lanka beat South Africa by 37 runs.

The first two ODIs with Zimbabwe will be at Galle and the remaining three 50-over games will be at the refurbished Ham-

bantota Stadium. The only Test match will be at the Premadasa Stadium in Colombo starting July 14.

SRI LANKA SQUAD: Angelo Mathews (captain), Upul Tharanga (vice captain), Niroshan Dikwella, Danushka Gunathilaka, Kusal Mendis, Asela Gunaratne, Wanidu Hasaranga, L. Sandakan, Akila Dananjaya, Nuwan Pradeep Fernando, Lasith Malinga, Dushmantha Chameera and Lahiru Madushanka.

Zimbabwe squad: Graeme Cremer (captain) Solomon Mire, Hamilton Masakadza, Craig Ervine, Sean Williams, Ryan Burl, Peter Moor, Raza Butt, Tendai Chatara, Christ Mpofo, Donald Tiripano, Richard Ngarava, Hamilton Masakadza, Malcolm Waller, Chamu Chibhabha and Tarisai Musakanda.

He declined to identify the other candidates, but said "Pothas is a strong contender for the job."

Ford, who was previously with Sri Lanka from 2012 to 2014, had said he faced a huge rebuilding task when he returned to the team in February last year, when the islanders had dropped

down the rankings.

Sri Lanka failed to reach the semi-finals of this month's eight-team Champions Trophy in England, and there have been recriminations with the country's sports minister Dayasiri Jayasekera accusing the players of being too fat.

Malinga to face disciplinary inquiry: Sri Lanka board



Fast bowler Lasith Malinga will face a disciplinary inquiry by Sri Lanka Cricket for comments he made to the media in breach of his contract, the board announced yesterday. A three-member panel would conduct the inquiry after Malinga twice broke rules by making statements to the media. SLC said in a statement. "Malinga has on two occasions since his return from the Champions Trophy acted in contravention of the terms of agreement which specifically bar him from making any statements to the media without the prior written consent of the Chief Executive Officer," the statement said. The board has called a meeting of its executive committee to discuss several issues, including the recent resignation of head coach Graham Ford and appointment of an interim replacement.