

RECOVERY 'TOUGHEST FIGHT': BLACKWELL

LONDON: Nick Blackwell said he was in the "toughest fight of his life" after waking from an induced coma following his British middleweight title defeat by Chris Eubank Jr. Blackwell, 25, collapsed shortly after his tenth-round stoppage loss to Eubank Jr at London's Wembley Arena on March 26. He was then taken to London's St Mary's Hospital with a bleed on the skull before doctors placed him in an induced coma. Yesterday saw Blackwell make his first public comment since the bout as he posted a message thanking well-wishers for their support on his brother Daniel's Facebook account. "Just want to say a massive thank you to everyone who has been there for me, all my friends and family, those who wished me well and those who raised money for me," Blackwell said. "I feel truly blessed and have massive love for you all. I couldn't have done it without you. It's been the toughest fight of my life and you all have made it that bit easier. On to rehab now, progress is getting better by the day. Big love to you all, Nick." During the fight Chris Eubank senior, the father of the new champion, could be heard telling his son to stop hitting Blackwell's head.—AFP



ALONSO TAKING NOTHING FOR GRANTED AHEAD OF F1

LONDON: Fernando Alonso hopes to be racing for McLaren at this weekend's Chinese Formula One Grand Prix but the Spaniard says he is taking nothing for granted ahead of a fitness test at the Shanghai circuit. The double world champion fractured his ribs in a crash at the season-opening Australian Grand Prix on March 20 and the governing FIA's medical team then ruled him out of the subsequent race in Bahrain. He will undergo more tests at the Chinese circuit tomorrow before the third round of the 21-race season. "It was disappointing to be told I couldn't race in Bahrain, but I fully respected the decision of the FIA medical team," he said yesterday in a team preview for the race. "While I hope I'll be back in the cockpit on Friday (for practice), until I get the all-clear from the doctors to race, whenever that may be, we cannot assume anything. "But I'm continuing to prepare for the race weekend as normal." The Spaniard was replaced in Bahrain by the team's Belgian reserve driver Stoffel Vandoorne, who ended up 10th to score McLaren's first point of the season after team mate Jenson Button failed to finish.—Reuters

TORRES PROTESTS BARCELONA RED CARD

MADRID: Atletico Madrid striker Fernando Torres said yesterday he was wrongly dismissed in last week's Champions League quarter final first leg with Barcelona. The striker is suspended from today second leg for getting sent off in the 35th minute at the Nou Camp for a double booking, shortly after giving Atletico the lead. Barcelona took advantage of having an extra man, Luis Suarez's second-half double setting up a 2-1 win which Atletico must overturn without Torres at the Vicente Calderon. "I'm convinced that the second yellow card was not a card, I felt a mix of impotence and frustration," Torres told Spanish radio station Cadena Ser yesterday, describing his foul on Barcelona midfielder Sergio Busquets. "When I see it again I see a slip-up. It's not a kick nor a late tackle. The only argument is that it was an action that could have been avoided. My ambition to make it 2-0 ended up harming the team," he added. "I'm certain that with 11 players we would have won. The following days after the game were difficult. It took two days to get over what happened. The moments after the sending off were the worst of my career. I just wanted to be alone." —Reuters



ABK HOSTS EXCITING 5TH ANNUAL GOLF CHALLENGE EVENT

KUWAIT: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) yesterday announced the results of its 5th Annual ABK Golf Challenge event held at the Sahara Golf Resort and Spa on April 2. 72 golfers participated on a warm sunny day perfect for golf. During the event, participants competed in teams of four for the sort after ABK Golf Challenge trophy. The 2016 winning team, as well as the second and third placed teams were handed their trophies from Abdullah Al Sumait - Deputy Chief General Manager and Stewart Lockie - General Manager Retail Banking.

Upon arrival each player was presented with an ABK branded Nike shirt and cap, a gift bag and Visa branded balls, for use on the course.

Dr Fouad Al Khadra, Yehya Bakir, Mohammad Saeed and Adnan Assaf won the challenge with a score of 56.4 points. Abdul Razaq Abdullah, Hamid Abdullah, Ahmed Al Sarawi and Ali al Jazzaf were runners up with 57.9 points and Stewart Lockie, Ramzi Al Shamali, George

Lambros and David Peterson took third place just 1 point behind with 58.9.

In addition to the winning team prizes, some extra awards were given to individuals. Razmic Moosesian and Leo Perera won the "Beat the Pro" competition, both received return business class tickets on Emirates Airline presented by Mohammed Alnahari Al Hashmi, Kuwait Country Manager and Brett Morrow, Manager - partnerships for Emirates, while "Nearest-the-pin" went to Qatami Al Qatami who received a putter presented by Ali Al Jazzaf from Golfme. The "Straightest-Drive" was won by Suresh Kaushal who received a KD 100 ABK Visa Emirates Gold prepaid travel card and finally, in good spirit, the losing team walked away with a complimentary hour of golf lessons at the Sahara Golf Club.

During the closing ceremony ABK thanked their partners; Emirates Airline, Golfme, Visa and Sahara Golf Club for their ongoing support.



RED WINGS' DATSYUK SAYS IT'S HARD TO MAKE DECISION NOW

DETROIT: Pavel Datsyuk has been drawing eyes and dropping jaws with his dazzling skills, dangling pucks on his stick and snatching them from opponents for more than a decade. He isn't used to doing it with his words.

Datsyuk did just that over the weekend when he revealed plans to leave the Detroit Red Wings after the playoffs with a year left on his contract to reunite with his teenage daughter and continue his career in Russia. He was peppered with questions Monday, a day after being quoted in a Detroit Free Press story saying he was retiring from the NHL as soon as Detroit finishes its postseason run.

Datsyuk told reporters Monday there is a chance he could change his mind. "It's hard to make a 100-percent decision now," he said. "Now, it's just more focus on the playoffs. Let the fun begin."

The 37-year-old Datsyuk sounded as if he was surprised by the stir he created by confirming what had been reported a week earlier by Sportsnet. He would much rather focus on Game 1 in Tampa Bay tonight.

When the series shifts to Detroit for Game 3 on Sunday, expect red-clad screaming fans in the Motor City to lobby for the Magic Man to return next season. Last week at home against Philadelphia, the "One more year!" chants almost brought Datsyuk to tears. "It was really emotional and it set me back a bit," he said.

Datsyuk, who signed a three-year, \$22.5 million contract, will count \$7.5 million against Detroit's salary cap next season even if he retires.

"Yeah, I'm really troubled by this one," he acknowledged. "I make a mistake. I need to sign year by year." Red Wings general manager Ken Holland said he will not comment on Datsyuk's future until the season is over. Detroit coach Jeff Blashill spoke, but said little about the situation. "I'm glad Pav is in our lineup on Wednesday," he said.

Red Wings captain Henrik Zetterberg is close with Datsyuk, a teammate since 2002, and isn't surprised to hear that the word has spread about Datsyuk's desire to go home. "I had a feeling," he said.

Detroit drafted Datsyuk in the sixth round in 1998 and he made his NHL debut three years later, helping the Red Wings win the Stanley Cup as a rookie. He was one of the franchise's stars as it won another title in 2008, the year in which he won his first of three straight Selke Trophies as the league's top defensive forward.

"One of the best two-way players in the game, and has been for a long time and continues to be," Blashill said. "He's a poster child of what it takes to be successful in this league now. He's skilled, but he competes hard, he's physical on puck and he's extremely good defensively."

Datsyuk helped Detroit extend its postseason streak to 25 years this season, finishing third in the Atlantic Division. He had 49 points after missing the first month of the season while recovering from ankle surgery. "He looks pretty quick and shifty to me right now," Blashill said. —AP

'SUPER' DAN SAYS SPORT SHOULD EXPAND GLOBAL REACH

SINGAPORE: Badminton can do more to become a global sport by allowing tournaments to be played outside the sport's traditional Asian bastions, two-time Olympic champion Lin Dan said yesterday. Speaking at a news conference ahead of this week's Singapore Open, the Chinese superstar said the sport should be more popular than it already is. "Badminton is an attractive sport that helps a lot of people, especially teenagers, both physically and mentally," he said through a translator. "If you want more (people) to accept and enjoy the sport, competitions have to be played in different parts of the world rather than always in India, Singapore, Malaysia or China," he added. "Should competitions of a high standard be organised in new venues, I am very willing to take part." The 32-year-old added it was the job of the Badminton World Federation to promote the sport to a wider international audience. Nicknamed "Super Dan" in 2004, by now-retired Danish star Peter Gade, the Chinese shuttler remains the only singles player to have scooped all nine major badminton titles on top of two Olympic golds.

While the pressure may be on Lin to add a third gold at the Rio Olympics in August, he said his focus would simply be to perform at his best. "We won't be thinking about statistics or the chances of winning gold. It's only by playing one's best in every game that you will have the best outcome," he said.—AFP

JUMP SPORTS ACADEMIES WINS SECOND QUALIFIER OF XEROX CORPORATE GOLF CHALLENGE

DUBAI: The second qualifying round of the 18th Xerox Corporate Golf Challenge, held at the Yas Links, Abu Dhabi, has identified the second group of teams to qualify for the Grand Finals, to be held later in the year.

Manny Ostojic and Mattias Bjorn from Jump Sports Academies team scored 47 points to be declared the winners, followed by Nicholas Hymas and Ghazi Arungazeb from Dubai & Surfers team in second place with 45 points. Two teams scored 44 points each, and, after countback, third placement to Christopher Bentley and Christian Seear from The Stokers team, and fourth place to Hiram Diggins and Andrea Hartley from Dream Team. In fifth was Aseem Azim and Saquib Mahmood from S&A team with 42 points.

DeVere Acuma's Nearest the Pin on hole 8 was won by Sungjin Hwang, and Chrysler's hole 17 Nearest the Pin by Ken Lowry. A new on-course competition - 'King of Pars' - sponsored by DeVere Acuma has been introduced to the 2016 Challenge. This competition recognises and rewards teams that perform best on Par 3's, Par 4's and Par 5's. The teams that score the best on the various hole types win a prize as well as enter the 'Golden Ticket' draw, which will see the lucky entrant win a place in the 2016 Grand Final. Winners of the first qualifier's King of Pars are;

King of the Par 3s: Sungjin Hwang and Moonwon Jo.
King of the Par 4s: Peter Godard and Chris Hewett.
King of the Par 5s: Mira Milligan and Iain Milligan.



Team 'Jump Sports Academies' wins second qualifier of the 18th Xerox Corporate Golf Challenge.